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SUBA GUJARAT UNDER AURANGZEB



PH.D, THESIS
SUBMITTED TO THE
THE M.S. UNIVERSITY OF BARODA
FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY
IN HISTORY

BY

SHAMA MAHMOOD

UNDER THE SUPERVISION OF
DR. S. HASAN MAHMUD,
READER
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DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY
FACULTY OF ARTS
THE MAHARAJA SAYAJIRAO UNIVERSITY OF BARODA
BARODA

MAY 1999

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This work is an outcome of the generous help and encouragement which I have received from my teachers, colleagues, friends and many others who helped me for the sake of this study.

I am greatly indebted to my supervisor Dr. S. Hasan Mahmud who has been a constant source of inspiration for me and whose untiring efforts and attention has rendered this study possible. His valuable guidance has enabled me to develop the methodology and thought for this work.

I gratefully acknowledge and thank Dr. R. J. Shah, Head Department of history, for his benevolent support, I am deeply obliged to Mr. Iftikhar Ahmed, Reader, Department of history, for his help and valuable suggestions. ~~my~~ sincere thanks are due to Dr. G. A. Pandor, Reader, Department of History for his all round support and encouragement. Needless to mention my colleague and friend Vibhuti who has always been there to encourage me. I thank her for all the care and support.

May I also express my sincere thanks to Shri L. M. Desai, Head, Department of Gujarati and Professor Sitanshu Mehta and Dr. Alka Mehta also from the Department of Gujarati for their valuable suggestions and their help to identify the sources for Gujarati Literature.

I wish to express my gratitude and thanks to Dr. Shaukat Ullah khan of Jamia Millia Islamia for his valuable suggestions for the literature review of my study. I must also thank Shri D.K. Jha of the Railway Staff College Baroda for sparing his valuable time for helping me with my work.

I must express my gratitude to Dr. M.F. Salat, Reader, Department of English, Dr. Anwar Zaheer and Dr. Wajeehuddin,



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Department of Persian, Arabic and Urdu for their constant encouragement and all round help.

I am also grateful to the authorities and staff of the various institutions who helped in the collection of relevant literature for my study. I would like to particularly mention, The National Archives of India, New Delhi, Library of the Indian Council of Historical Research, New Delhi, M.A. Ansari Library Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi, Maulana Azad Library, and Library of the Department of History Centre for Advanced Study, Aligarh Muslim University Aligarh, Library of the B.J. Institute of Learning and Research, and Pir Mohammad Shah Library, Ahmadabad, Baroda Record office, Oriental Institute and Smt. Hansa Mehta Library, The Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda.

Lastly I owe more than words can express, gratitude to my grand father, parents and other members of my family, particularly my elder brother, for the encouragement and motivation, all through, till the completion of this work.

Shama Mahmood

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INTRODUCTION

Gujarat which is the northern most region on the western seaboard of India is broadly composed of three sub-regions distinct from each other: the mainland, the peninsula of Saurashtra and the north-western region of Kutch. The Mughal Suba of Gujarat coincided substantially with the present state of Gujarat comprising these three sub-regions.

These three sub-regions within Gujarat have been shaped by geographic and topographic features. The mainland is separated by an ill-defined belt which was once an extension of the sea - the ^{ly}~~gulf~~ of Khambat. The northern plains formed the core of not only the Chalukyan kingdom but also the Sultanate of Gujarat. To its east lay a region relatively less accessible which merged into the hilly region both to the north and the east and south-east which separated Gujarat from Mewar, Malwa and the Deccan.

The land was relatively arid upto Ahmadabad; between Ahmadabad and Bharuch it was better watered and thus formed the richest agrarian zone within the region. South of the river Narmada was a peculiar region. Here the hills close in on the sea, numerous ^a~~rivers~~ fall into the sea and the rainfall is high. The central authority in Gujarat had not been able to firmly penetrate into this region. The northern plains were watered by five major



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rivers: Narmada, Sabarmati, Mahi, Vatrak and Tapti which facilitated agriculture.

The Peninsula of Saurashtra with its beak stretched into the sea had a big coast-line dotted with a number of small and big ports and port towns. The terrain of the region is largely rocky and agriculture was possible only in the shallow valleys that are formed and are watered chiefly by rain-fed rivers and rivulets. Ethnically it is composed of people who were referred to as Rajputs and had settled in the region as pastoral-nomads through a series of migrations from the Sindh region around the close of the first A.D. The control of the central authority of Gujarat during the Pre-Mughal period over this region, due to the reasons of geography and ethnicity, was not on the same footing as that of the northern plains.

The region of Kutch ethnically akin to the Saurashtra region, with a few ports and port towns along its western portion touching the sea consisted largely of the desert called the Runn which becomes soggy during the rainy season and thus gets inaccessible from the mainland.

While the northern plains of Gujarat forming the core of the dynasties ruling independently on Gujarat was the agrarian zone within Gujarat, the importance of Saurashtra and Kutch lay in their overseas trading facilities.

It will be worthwhile to briefly recount the history of the region to place our study in a proper perspective. The region of

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Gujarat witnessed the rule of a number of dynasties since the early medieval times. It was however with the accession of Alauddin Khalji on the throne of Delhi that an era of Delhi Sultanate rule was initiated in Gujarat. He was the first Delhi Sultan who annexed Gujarat in 1304-5 and made it a part of the Delhi Sultanate. With the incorporation of Gujarat in the Sultanate of Delhi a new phase began in the history of this region.

Soon after the conquest, Alauddin conferred the region of Gujarat on Alpkhan and the latter took its charge probably in 1305-6. Alpkhan ruled over Gujarat as *Nazim* for nearly thirteen years and provided stability to the region. He was particular to adopt a conciliatory policy towards the prosperous Jain community. Two inscriptions one from Cambay and the other from Petlad bear testimony to this fact¹. In 1315, Alpkhan was recalled to the capital and was subsequently assassinated. Shortly after his tragic death ended the reign of Sultan Alauddin who expired in 1316.

With the initiation of the rule of the Delhi Sultanate in Gujarat a gradual process of the displacement of the Rajput power had begun. No systematic effort was however made to completely subdue the hostile Rajput strongholds. A large part of the region remained independent for quite some time. Alauddin's sway had been confined to the principal towns from Jalor and Patan in the north to Broach and Surat in the south. The survivors of Ra

¹ S.C. Misra, *Rise of Muslim Power In Gujarat*, London, 1963, p.125.



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Khengar in Saurashtra, the Rathors of Idar and the Gohils of Champaner carried on their struggle for independence.

Alpkhan's departure from Gujarat was followed by serious disorders in the province and a rapid change of governors took place within a short span of time. The period intervening the break up of the Khalji regime and the rise of the Tughlaqs saw the loosening of the grip of the central authority over the distant provinces like Gujarat. The central authority was in no position to keep control over nobles holding the charge of far flung areas.

Though the early years of the Tughluq regime did not witness any significant development in Gujarat, however, the general policies of Mohammad bin Tughlaq which led to several uprisings in the empire had their repercussions in Gujarat also. An important feature of his reign was the revolt of the Afghans or the *amiran-i-sadah*. Though a large number of insurgents were killed when the Sultan personally led an army in Gujarat in 1345, their power could not be broken completely.

Sultan Firuz Shah the successor of Mohammad bin Tughlaq was perhaps aware of the declining tendencies of the Sultanate and he realised the difficulty of governing the outlying province of Gujarat directly from Delhi. He therefore resorted to a stratagem by which the state could be assured of the fixed amount of revenue from the province. The nobles who agreed to pay the maximum amount of revenue to the state were given the charge of different provinces. The contractual appointment of the nobles

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however did not prove successful and the last of the nobles of Gujarat, Farhatulmulk, also known as Rasti Khan openly defied the central authority. During the later years of Firuzshah's reign we do not find the governors formally acknowledging the central authority. The latter by this time had become too weak to assert itself against a disobedient governor like Farhatul-Mulk.

It was during the reign of Muhammed Shah, the successor of Firuz Shah that the ambitious designs of the governor of Gujarat were sought to be checked. Sultan Muhammed Shah of Delhi appointed Zafar Khan to Gujarat to deal with Farahat-ul-Mulk. It is significant to note in this regard that chief consideration behind the choice of Zafar Khan for Gujarat was the personal loyalty of the latter towards the Sultan. The emphasis on personal relationship of the appointee is itself a pointer towards the breakdown of the administrative apparatus.

The invasion of Timur in 1398. was a serious blow to the already disintegrating Delhi Sultanate. The contemporary ruler, Mahmud, neither possessed power nor territory but managed to remain king just for the name sake. The power had passed more or less under the control of Mallu Iqbalkhan a powerful noble of the Delhi court.

The manner in which the Sultan fled from Delhi to Gujarat and thence to Malwa to seek refuge from Timur's attack on his capital clearly depicts the decadent state of the Tughlaq rule.



Gujarat during this period emerged as a powerful region, formally accepting the authority of the Delhi sultans. It was in these circumstances that Zafar Khan the governor of Gujarat raised the umbrella of royalty and broke off his link with the Delhi Sultanate in 1407 and called himself Sultan Muzaffar Shah.

Gujarat thus emerged as an independent kingdom destined to play a very important role in subsequent centuries.

The period of Gujarat Sultanate which lasted for more than a century witnessed the process of conquests and consolidation under the successors of Sultan Muzaffar Shah. A systematic effort was made by the Sultans to reduce hostile centres and penetrate into distant areas. By the time Bahadur Shah established his power. Gujarat had attained a considerable degree of consolidation. Refractory chiefs appear to have been brought into order for we do not hear of the instances of resistance by the local chiefs during this period, the base of the sultanate had been expanded and the patronage of the state to the growth of trade and industry had led to economic prosperity in this region. There is evidence that suggests that commercial activities in the province were not only pursued by the merchant community, Sections of the ruling class also engaged in commercial pursuits.¹ Thus commercial interaction with the western world provided much wealth to the kingdom which consequently added to its lure.

¹ Surendra Gopal, *Commerce and Crafts in Gujarat*, New Delhi, 1975, p.122



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Perhaps it was the stable political condition of Gujarat which prompted Bahadur Shah to extend the frontiers of Gujarat. Malwa was annexed in 1531. His attempts to annex Mewar were frustrated by the Mughal emperor Humayun.

After the death of Bahadur Shah in 1537 the province was distracted on account of civil war among the nobles. During the reign of Sultan Muzaffar Shah III, who was destined to be the last ruler of the dynasty, political condition deteriorated to such an extent that the leading nobles of the realm had begun to divide the kingdom among themselves. The inner rivalries amongst the nobility of Gujarat weakened its central authority to a great extent. To this political chaos was added a new element, the arrival of the Mirzas in Gujarat.

After 1556 two of the Timurid nobles Ibrahim Husain Mirza and Mohammad Husain Mirza having raised an insurrection against Akbar took refuge with Changiz Khan, one of the nobles of Gujarat. The Mirza brothers played a vital political role in the declining days of the Sultanate. After the death of Changiz Khan, they gained control of the region from the south of Mahi to the borders of Khandesh and maintained their authority with the help of a small number of Mughal troopers.¹ The expansion of political power under the Mirza brothers was a matter of serious concern to the Mughal emperor and it paved the way for the conquest of Gujarat by Akbar in 1572-73.

¹ M.S. Gammassariat, *A History of Gujarat*, Vol. I, Bombay, 1938, p. 498.



The conquest of Gujarat was also the logical culmination of Akbar's policy of expansion. It may be noted that Malwa was annexed as early as 1561 and Chittor in 1568. In the year 1571, Khandesh was occupied. Thus, the boundaries of Mughal empire had, after the conquest of these regions, become contiguous with that of the kingdom of Gujarat. The conquest of Gujarat was therefore the logical corollary of the dynamics of Mughal conquests in western India. The revolt of the Mirzas and the shelter provided to them by the Gujarat nobles only became the immediate cause of the Mughal annexation of Gujarat.

After the conquest, Gujarat became one of the Subas of the Mughal empire. Mirza Aziz Koka was appointed the first *subedar* of the province. Shortly after the conquest attempts were made to organize the administration of the new Suba. The conquest of Junagadh was undertaken in the year 1592 soon after the death of Sultan Muzaffar Shah III, the last ruler of the Sultanate of Gujarat. The Mughals got possession of a considerable number of sea ports in this region including Ghogha, Mangrol, Somnath, and a few others. Keeping in view the commercial value of these ports special arrangements were made to administer them.¹

¹ Regarding the suitability of Gujarat ports in meeting the requirements of north-western India of imported commodities, Surendra Gopal notes " Gujarat ports were most suitable for meeting requirements of north-western India of imported commodities. Apart from this different kinds of exportable items produced in the various parts of the Mughal empire found an exit through the ports of Gujarat. Imperial authority laid emphasis not only on the development of overland commerce, but a systematic effort was also made to promote land routes through building roads. Gujarat was thus, linked with important points in neighbouring provinces and with all the states of north India through Agra". *Commerce and Crafts in Gujarat*, p. 16.



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Apart from the insurrection of Prince Bahadur, son of Sultan Muzaffar Shah III of Gujarat, which was suppressed, Jahangir's reign saw the arrival of Captain Hawkins, a representative of East India Company to the coast to seek royal permission for establishing trade links between India and England. In 1608 the first Factory of East India Company was established at Surat and it remained as the centre of trade till 1687. Gujarat became the base of the Company and the trading activities of the English also increased the demand for the manufactured commodities of the Suba, which were being exported to England and other parts of Europe.

Upon Jahangir's death in 1627, Prince Shahjahan who was in Deccan marched to Agra by way of Gujarat. The factory records mention that when Shahjahan reached Surat, his agents demanded and secured a forced loan from the townsmen. The English paid 5,000 rials, while several of the merchants borrowed money from the Company to lend the amount to the Prince.¹ After reaching Ahmadabad, the prince ordered the city gates to be locked for two days to prevent the rich Hindu merchants from fleeing and collected twenty lakhs of rupees from them?²

Once he assumed control as emperor Shahjahan followed a policy of appeasement towards the thriving merchant community. In 1648 a *farman* was issued in favour of Shantidas Jawhari, a

¹ M.S Commissariat, *A History of Gujarat*, vol. II, p. 106

² Ibid, p. 108.



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leading merchant of the city of Ahmadabad restoring to the latter the Jain temple in the city which had earlier been desecrated and converted into a mosque by prince Aurangzeb in 1645.¹

Another *farman* confirming the grant of the village of Palitana to Shantidas Jawhari was issued in 1657 by emperor Shahjahan.² Throughout the reign of Shahjahan Gujarat remained quite peaceful. However, the great famine which gripped the province in 1630-32 led to great distress and suffering to the people. The economic effects of the famine were also apparent on the trade and industry.

In 1645 Prince Aurangzeb was appointed the *Subedar* of Gujarat. The account of *Mirat - i - Ahmadi* gives an impression that Aurangzeb was sent to Gujarat to deal with the disturbed condition, for immediately after reaching Gujarat he collected a large number of soldiers for the establishment of order and chastisement of the refractory elements³. The pattern of subsequent events suggest that it was the Kolis who were creating troubles in the province. To deal with these elements, Aurangzeb had to raise troops at his own expense, for he wrote to the emperor that he had spent much more than he had received as income. Shahjahan rewarded him by increasing his *mansab* by a thousand horse.

¹ M.S. Commussariat, *Studies in the History of Gujarat*, Ahmadabad, 1987, pp.129-130

² Ibid, pp.65-66

³ Ali Mohd. Khan, *Mirat-i-Ahmadi*, Vol. I, ed S. Nawab Ali, Calcutta, 1928, p. 220.



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Aurangzeb's tenure as *subedar* of Gujarat is marked by two events which leave an impression of religious bigotry: He ordered the temple of Chintamani, built by Shantidas Jawhari, a leading merchant of Ahmadabad, to be desecrated and converted into a mosque. The mosque thereafter was named as *Quvvat-ul-Islam*. (For details see Chapter 4).

Shantidas Jawhari seem to have enjoyed a considerable influence at the court of the Mughal emperors from the time of Jahangir. It is probable that he made a representation to the court and Shahjahan issued an imperial *farman* dated July 3, 1648, directing Ghairat Khan, and other officials in Gujarat to restore the building to Shantidas and to make him complete restitution for all the damage that was done¹

Another event which is associated with Prince Aurangzeb's tenure was the conflict with the Mahdavis. The account of this episode is given in two works, the *Mirat-i-Ahmadi* and in the *Palanpur History*. *Mirat-i-Ahmadi's* account differs in some details from that given in *Palanpur History*. According to which Sayed Raju, or leader of the Mahdavis, with several of his followers came to Ahmadabad and entered the service of the Prince. When Aurangzeb was apprised of the fact that Sayed Raju preferred the Mahdavi creed he at once ordered the expulsion of the Mahdavis from the city. Both versions are in agreement about the *fatwa* issued by the Ulema and the scuffle that followed at Rustam Bagh

¹ M.S. Commissariat, Op.cit, p.57.



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in which the Mahadavis along with Sayed Raju were killed in large numbers. During this time Qazi Abdul Qavi and Qazi Abdul Wahab were the leading advisors of the Prince at Ahmadabad¹.

The account provided by *Palanpur History* clearly indicates that the expulsion and the execution of the Mahadavis took place at the instigation of the Ulema². Aurangzeb although not directly related with this event, provided patronage to the Ulema in this connection. The *ulema* thus felt encouraged to assert themselves vis-à-vis the Mahdavis and other religious Islamic sects in Gujarat.

However, we often find contradictions in Aurangzeb's religious attitude due to the reason that he had to function within the parameters of the Mughal state as laid down by Akbar. As a matter of administrative exigency, for example, he placated the Jain community by offering grants to their temples such as that of Palitana. A detailed discussion on Aurangzeb's religious attitude will be taken up in Chapter IV.

In 1646, the Prince was called back to the capital as he was to be given charge of the Balkh and Badakhshan campaign. On the recall of Prince Aurangzeb, Shahjahan appointed his brother-in-law Shaista Khan, to be the *Subedar* of Gujarat. Kolis

¹ M.S. Commissariat, Op. cit, p.126.

² In order to clear up some religious dispute between the Prince's retainers and some horse-dealers who held Mahadavi creed, Qazi Abdul Qavi and Qazi Abdul Wahab advised Aurangzeb to summon the Mahdavi leader from Palanpur. Sayed Raju reached Ahmadabad shortly after and entered into religious discussions with the *Ulema*. It was after the discussion that the *Ulema* issued a *fatwa* for the expulsion of the Mahadavis from the city, and also secured Prince Aurangzeb's sanction for its execution. It was at the secret investigation of the *Ulema* that the Kotwal of the city raised his troops and attacked the Mahadavis. Ibid. p. 126.



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seems to have renewed their insurrection within a short time and Shaista Khan took ruthless measure to suppress their movements.

In 1648, Shaista Khan was transferred to the Suba of Malwa, and Prince Dara Shikoh was given the charge of Gujarat. Dara however, ruled this province through a deputy Baqir Beg titled as Ghairat Khan. Prince Murad Bakhsh was the last of Shahjahan's sons to serve as the *Subedar* of Gujarat.

Shahjahan's last years were marked by an acute war of succession. In 1654 when Shahjahan fell seriously ill Prince Murad Bakhsh, marched with an army to capture the flourishing port town of Surat. Surat castle was captured and before his final departure from Ahmadabad Prince Murad is believed to have extracted five and a half lakh of rupees from Manikchand and his brothers the sons of great Jain merchant and jeweller Shantidas¹. The civil strife lasted for almost two years. Aurangzeb's display of superior general ship coupled with diplomacy however, brought an end to this phase of political anarchy.

Though Aurangzeb ascended the throne in 1658 he refrained from assuming the title and the recitation of the Khutba in his name was postponed for sometime. It was only after the death of Dara that a second coronation of Aurangzeb took place. It is a well known fact that the chief Qazi of the empire had refused to recite the Khutba in the name of Aurangzeb on the grounds that it was unlawful to recite the Khutba in the name of the son during the life

¹ M.S. Commissariat, Op.cit, p.136.



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time of his father the reigning king. A vital part in this coronation was played by Qazi Abdul Wahab of Gujarat who recited the Khutba in the name of Aurangzeb and as reward was exalted to the position of *Qazi-ul-Quzzat* of the empire. Among the men who were conferred honours at this occasion was the leading merchant of Ahmadabad, Shantidas Jawhari. Thus, we find a sudden shift in Aurangzeb's policy with regard to the Hindu merchant class. While a *subedar* of Gujarat, Aurangzeb had demolished the Chmtamani temple of Ahmadabad built by Shantidas. But immediately after becoming the king. Aurangzeb not only favoured Shantidas with honour, but the whole merchant community was assured of the safety and security through a royal *farman*.¹ It is interesting to note that this particular posture of the imperial authority was conveyed through Shantidas. Aurangzeb in fact went out of his way to placate Shantidas and through him the merchant community of Gujarat by ordering the repayment of the loan amount to Shantidas advanced by the latter kin to Prince Murad Bakhsh at the time of the war of succession.²

Objectives of the Study:

The present study is mainly focused on understanding the socio-economic and administrative structure of Suba Ahmadabad

¹ Ali Mohd. Khan, Op. cit, p.212-213.

² *Manshur* of Aurangzeb dated 21 Ziqada 1068 A.H. issued to Rahmat Khan to pay a sum of one lakh rupees from the royal treasury to Shantidas as part of payment of Rupees five lakhs advanced by Shantidas to Prince Murad. Cf. S. Hasan Mahmud, 'The Mughals and a Merchant Prince of Ahmedabad', *proceedings Indian History congress*, 1985 p.7 Also see Commissariat, op. cit. p. 73.



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(Gujarat) under Aurangzeb. The Suba with a number of ports and port-towns connected to the Indian ocean trade, and a rich hinterland, facilitating the trading and commercial activity. Played a very significant role in the economy of the Mughal empire. Its political and administrative functioning was thus very vital for the Mughal empire. The second half of the 17th century, the period covered by Aurangzeb's reign, was particularly crucial for Gujarat and the Mughal empire as the European trading companies started extending their influence in the region. Coupled with this was the destabilising role of the Maratha inroads which Aurangzeb had to tackle. How far did he succeed in his efforts and what were the consequences of this for the imperial administration in Gujarat has been examined in the present work.

An attempt has been made to understand the working of the different administrative institutions of the Mughals in *suba* Gujarat during the reign of Aurangzeb. Thus, the state of administration, general as well as revenue has been examined. This has been done in the back-drop of the Maratha-Mughal contest in Gujarat which had a direct bearing on the administration of the *suba*.

Trade and commercial activity greatly depended on the efficiency of administration. Hence, aspects of the trade and commerce of the *suba* during the period of our study have also been examined primarily with a view to understand the effects of the political developments on the economy of the *suba*.



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The extent to which Aurangzeb's religious policy affected the economy and politics, of the *suba* has also been examined since it related to mercantile communities constituting both Hindus and ~~some~~ Islamic sects.

Also examined is Aurangzeb's attitude towards the merchant class in Gujarat in the context of his religious policy. The contradiction between his orthodox religious policy and the Mughal imperial interests in promoting economic development and the resolution of this contradiction in Gujarat by Aurangzeb has been investigated.

Gujarat, by virtue of its geography and overseas trading activity had become the home of a number of social groups - ethnic, linguistic and religious - who were responsible for the creation of a distinct socio-cultural milieu. Therefore we have made an attempt to assess developments in the fields of language and literature in Gujarat. The role of *sufis* and the exponents of Krishna Bhakti in Gujarat in the development of language and literature and the emergence of a 'composite culture' has been studied in one of the chapters.

Sources of Study:

Though there are a number of Persian chronicles belonging to Aurangzeb's period, only a few of them contain information pertaining to Gujarat. Amongst such works, *Muntakhab-ul-Lubab* of Khwafi Khan, *Futuh-i-Alamgiri* of Isar Das Nagar and



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Nuskha-i-Dilkusha of Bhim Sen Nagar may be mentioned. They, however, do not deal with Gujarat in detail as they were written in the form of general histories of Aurangzeb's reign. A sketchy account of Gujarat is also contained in the copy of *Mukhtasar Tarikh-i-Gujarat* which is preserved in the National Archives, New Delhi. The most comprehensive and informative work on Gujarat still remains to be the *Mirat-i-Ahmadi* of Ali Mohammad Khan, the last Mughal *diwan* of Gujarat. The value of the work is enhanced also because of the variety of documents that it reproduces which provide a wealth of information on various revenue and administrative matters, particularly for the reign of Aurangzeb. The *Mirat*, together with its *zamima*, or Supplement therefore constitutes the basic source of information for this study. Unfortunately the only English translation of the work (carried out by M.F. Lokhandwala) is extremely misleading. Hence the Persian text edited by Syed Nawab Ali although not entirely free from errors has been judiciously utilised for the present study.

There is also a collection of *diwani* records in the Apparao Bholanath Collection at B.J. Institute of Learning and Research, Ahmadabad. The collection has been given a Gujarati title *Diwan-nu khata-nu-pustak* (Collection of *Diwani* Records) in the catalogue of the Institute, though it exclusively contains Persian documents, of *Suba* Gujarat, many of them are pertaining to the period of Aurangzeb. A perusal of the documents gives the impression that this collection was done by Ali Muhammad Khan

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and probably constitutes the material not utilised by him in the *Mirat-i-Ahmadi*. Some of the documents in this collection provide very useful information on *suba* Gujarat under Aurangzeb.

Epistolary works such as the *Ruqqat-i-Alamgiri* and the *Kalimat-i-Tayyabat* sometime yield interesting information. So do collections of documents, some in published form, pertaining to the period of Aurangzeb.

Another category of sources giving useful information on the society and economy of *suba* Gujarat is the Travelogues of the European travellers. Particularly useful for us have been Bernier's Travels, and the Accounts of Thevenot, Tavernier, Mandelslo and Owington. The English Factory Records also provide useful information on the political developments, nobles, officers, traders and merchants, besides information on various aspects of the economy of the *suba*.



CHAPTER - 1

MUGHAL - MARATHA CONTEST IN GUJARAT

Shivaji's Sack of Gujarat :

The rise of Marathas in the Deccan and the consolidation of their power in the Seventeenth century under Shivaji was of immense consequence for the Mughal empire. It bogged down the Mughal emperor Aurangzeb in the Deccan for more than two decades which led to slackening of his authority over the north Indian provinces. The administration of Gujarat too appears to have been affected in this process. The cupidity of the Marathas attracted them to Gujarat with very wide ranging consequences for its economy and administration.

Three Maratha attacks on Surat took place during the reign of Aurangzeb, in 1664, 1670 and 1706. The first two attacks were led by Shivaji in which the city of Surat was thoroughly ransacked. These attacks were also an open assertion of Shivaji's authority *visa - vis* the Mughals and it clearly demonstrated the state of Mughal administration in Gujarat.

The attack and subsequent sack of Surat by Shivaji in 1664 was witnessed by many of the English and Dutch merchants and the factory records and the accounts of travellers provide us with sufficient details of this incident. The city of Surat which was not fortified till then was subjected to systematic plundering raids by



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Shivaji. President of the English factory, an eye witness to the events, describes the despoilation in these words, "From that time none of his [Shivaji's] party dared to come near us, but continued a great deal of tyranny and cruelty to townsmen, cutting off the hands of some and the heads of others, day and night robbing and burning down the city, until the 11th, which day he made a general fire round about the town "1.

While the plundering raid on Surat was on, a member of the English factory named Anthony Smith was made captive by the Marathas. However, after knowing his low official status he was released². "When he (Anthony Smith) came away, he could not but guess, by the money heaped up on two great heaps before Shivaji's tent, than that he gathered 20 or 25 lakh of rupees that the day when he came away in the morning there were brought in near upon 300 porters laden each with two bags of rupees, and some he guessed to be gold : that they brought in 28 sers of large pearl, with many other jewels, great diamonds, rubies and emeralds ... and there, with an incredible quantity of money, they found out the house of the reputed richest merchant in the world (his name is Virji Vora - his estate having been esteemed to be 80 lakh of rupees) : that they were still, every hour while he was there bringing in loads of money from his house."3

¹ *English Factories in India*, 1661-64, ed. William Foster, Oxford, 1906-1927, p.301.

² M.S. Commassariat, *History of Gujarat*, Vol. III, Ahmedabad, 1980, p.264.

³ *English Factories in India*, 1661-64, p 308.



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The merchants suffered most heavily during Shivaji's raid on Surat. Besides Virji Vora the others whose houses were given over to plunder were Haji Zahid Beg and Haji Qasim.¹ Shivaji's men also burnt the residences of these merchants to the ground except that of Haji Zahid Beg, which being in the immediate vicinity of the English Factory was saved in the process of the English defending their own property. The spoils secured by the Marathas through this plundering raid have been estimated around ten million of rupees.²

Bernier's account regarding Shivaji's plundering raid is also significant. He says "Burning what he could not take away, Shivaji returned without the least opposition, laden with gold and silver to the amount of several millions; with pearls, silver stuffs, fine cloths and a variety of other costly merchandise. A secret understanding it was suspected existed between Jaisingh and Shivaji, and the former was supposed to have been accessory to the attempt on *chah-hest* as well as the attack of Surat. The Raja was therefore recalled from Deccan but instead of going to Delhi he returned to his own territories."³

It is significant to note that when the Maratha attack began the port officer (*mutasaddi*) of Surat, Inayat Khan, instead of

¹ Neither Virji Vohra nor Haji Zahid Beg seems to have completely ruined during Shivaji's raid on Surat for an English letter of November 27, 1664 some ten months after the raid says that Haji Zahid Beg and Virji Vora, the two greatest merchants of this town held up their heads still and are of great bargains; so that it seems Shivaji hath not carried away all; but left them a competency to carry on their trade. *English Factories in India*, 1661-64, p.313.

² *English Factories in India*, 1661-64, p 301

³ *Travels in the Mughal Empire*, F. Bernier, ed. Vincent Smith, Oxford, 1934, p.188.

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arranging for defence, sought refuge in the castle along with the rest of the royal officials. Though deserted by the Mughal officers, the President of the English Factory George Oxenden offered stiff resistance and defended the lives and goods of his people. The English Factory at this time consisted of not only one lakh of rupees in cash, but also valuable stock of goods. J.C. Bruce, the historiographer of the East India Company also gives a detailed description of the sack of Surat. He writes that 'These commercial arrangements were unexpectedly interrupted in January 1663-64 by a sudden attack on Surat by Shivaji's army commanded by the chief in person. On his approach the governor shut himself up in the castle, while the inhabitants fled, either in boat or in to the adjoining country. In this emergency, Sir George Oxenden and the Company's servants shut themselves up in the factory with their property, which they estimated at 80,000, and after testifying it called in the ships' crew for defence. When attacked, they made a brave and obstinate resistance, and this opposition not only preserved the factory but also the town from destruction. Sevagee however, carried off the immense booty"¹.

All these facts suggest that the Mughal administration was ill prepared to face the onslaught of the Marathas. Bernier's statement that Jaisingh was in league with Shivaji should also be viewed in the light of these facts. The way Mughal officers surrendered the city without offering any resistance to the

¹ J.C Bruce, *Annals of the East India Company*, II, p.144



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Marathas strengthens the impression that besides the laxity of administration for which this problem could not be tackled, some of the Mughal officers were in league with the Marathas which made the latter's task easier.

The *Mirat-i-Ahmadi* reinforces this suggestion when it states that the *nazim* of the Suba Mahabat Khan arrived in Surat after Shivaji left the town. Mahabat Khan came with an army consisting of contingents supplied by the zamindars. Jagmal the *gerasia* of Sanand came with the Mughal *faujdar* of Dholqa. Besides him, there were the zamindars of Idar, Kadi, Raja of Dungarpur, zamindar of Wadhwan, Jhalawar, Mandu, Haldardas, Lunawara and Belpar, each of them accompanied by a considerable number of troops.¹

The subsequent conduct of Mahabat Khan would bring little laurels to the Mughals. He stationed himself for three months at the port and started collecting *peshkash* from the region. The tax paying subjects thus instead of being provided with protection and relief after the Maratha plunder were subjected to further exactions by the *nazim* of the Suba. Mahabat Khan after collecting Rs. three lakhs as *peshkash* left the port town of Surat.²

Mirat-i-Ahmadi's information in the context of Maratha attack on Surat is sketchy and the English factory records are our chief source of information on this subject. They reveal that Mahabat

¹ Ali Mohd Khan, *Mirat-i-Ahmadi*, ed. S. Nawab Ali, Vol. I, Calcutta, 1928, p.256.

² Ibid, p.256



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Khan's conduct did evoke an angry response from the people of the town, who showed their disgust by throwing dirt on the Mughal *subedar* when the latter arrived in Surat.¹

This event provided opportunity to Georg Oxenden and his council to seek for further trade concessions for themselves. They sent a petition to the Emperor for remission of the custom dues. In view of the losses to the merchants, Surat received an imperial *farman* to the effect that all the Surat merchants, Indian as well as foreign, were in view of the losses they had suffered, granted exemption for one year from custom duties on all imports and exports. At the same time, as a further mark of royal pleasure, the English and the Dutch merchants were given after the expiry of the year, a remission of $\frac{1}{2}$ percent in the $2\frac{1}{2}$ percent duty payable by them on all imports.² Six years later in 1670, Shivaji raided Surat for the second time, destroying the prosperity of the town.

In March 1670, six months before Shivaji's invasion, Gerald Aungier who succeeded Sir Georg Oxenden as President of Surat factory describes the situation at Surat in these words : "The town

¹ Describing the contempt of the people of against the Mughal Subedar and the latters anguish over their conduct Factory records mention that 'for the citizens derided him and flung dirt at him. His son took an inhuman revenge for this by shooting down with an arrow a poor Banya who had just come across the river with his pack on his back, 'showing the insulting pride and baseness of those people, that durst not stand an enemy to save their estates, yet killed a poor Bania that durst not do him any injury. *English Factories in India*, 1661-64, p. 306

² J. Bruce says " 'Soon after this event Surat was again menaced with the approach of seavagee's army. Sir George Oxenden seized this opportunity, while the Mughal officers were again looking for the assistance of the English, to send Mr. Goodier, and two others of the company's principal servants to Broach, to solicit from the King's uncle, Mahabat Khan, at this time Governor of Guzerat, the further confirmation of the Company's privileges, and received a *parwana* from the Mogul granting to the English the whole of the custom of Surat for one year, and an abatement of one percent on the rate which they were subsequently to pay at Surat, J C Bruce, Letter from the President and Council of Surat to the court, 28 Jan. 1663-64, p.145



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of Surat is at present in a most distracted condition, occasioned by the fear of Sevagee whose late success and conquests, as also his near approaches, being sometimes within 20 leagues of this place, ... hath made all in general provide for themselves some by flight betraying their pusillanimity. Others demonstrating a resolution to defend themselves and estates by fortifying their houses and keeping soldier to guard them. The Dutch and the French following the example of the latter by entertaining in to their service several peons (messenger) besides their own men which they have taken out of their shops, with which forces they promise the governor and other officers to assist them on occasion against sevagee."¹

English council also decided to take up the safety measures against the Marathas and wrote to the Deputy Governor of Bombay to spare them with 35 or 40 white Portuguese soldiers who were in service with few English 'file-leaders'. Accordingly 39 white Portuguese soldiers, with a sergeant and four other English old experienced soldiers were shipped from Bombay to Surat at the end of March. Meanwhile the alarm at Surat had considerably diminished, owing to the arrival of Bahadur Khan, the Viceroy of Gujarat, with 3,000 horses to protect the town from attack. Aungier, therefore, as an economic measure sent back the soldiers to Bombay. The presence of the *nazim* however, was not

¹ Sir Charles, Fawcett, (ed.) *The English Factories in India, 1670-77*, (The Western Presidency), Vol. I, Oxford, 1936, p.189.



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without its embarrassments. As Aungier expressed in his letter to the company "It eased us of the present fears, but cost us, the French and Dutch and all the merchants deare for our protection in presents to him, which is a civil kind of plunder demanded by these great *Umbrawes* (*Umara*) as a tribute due to them". The Dutch presents were worth Rs.3,000 or 4,000 and those of the French as much as Rs.15,000; the council accordingly, thought it politic to add presents to the value of Rs.1,500 to the few Europe toys and rarities with which they had hoped to content him. A considerable part of the letter to the company had to be devoted to explaining the necessity for this means of obtaining favours¹.

Besides this, the English company emptied their ware houses at Surat of all goods that were ready for despatch to Europe and there was thus little of value left in the factory. The company was however, facing considerable risk in obtaining goods from outside the country owing to the frequent robberies. The Factory record mentions that "the thieves and inland Rajahs taking the opportunity of plundering *cafilas* (Caravans) are robbing merchants under the name of Sevagy."² The brokers at Ahmedabad and Agra accordingly hesitated to send down goods to Surat. To meet this situation the council made forward contracts for the sale of all the company's broad cloth, tin and copper expected to arrive on the ships. Khwaja Minaz, on behalf of Virji

¹ Sir Charles Fawcett, Op cit, p.190.

² Ibid, p.190.



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Vora, took the cloth, and *Nachand* (grandson of Virji) the tin and copper.¹ The Mughal administration could not prevent the second sack of Surat by Shivaji, which took place on 3rd October 1670.² The situation by then had become so grim that Gerald Aungier, the President of the Surat factory, wrote "The distraction in the town was so great that there was neither governor nor government."³

On the day of attack Shivaji's army took possession of the whole town except that of the English, the Dutch and the French houses and the two *serais* of the city where foreign merchants and travellers kept their goods. One of these was occupied by Persian and Turkish merchants, while in the other the ex-king of Khashgar, who had been exiled from his country; had taken up residence. The Tartar ruler had sought the protection of the Mughal emperor and had returned from a pilgrimage to Mecca. The English records reveal that French made a private peace for themselves

¹ Ibid, p.192.

² All the time of the second Maratha raid on Surat the Chiefs and Council of the English Factory were at Suwali Marine. The goods brought in the ships had largely been unloaded. While the council had emptied their ware houses at Surat of all goods that were ready for despatch to Europe. Though the English factors made adequate preparations to secure the interests of the Company, they were not willing to desert the factory. Hence, it was decided to send up to Surat one of the Council, Streyn sham Master, with forty seamen taken from the ships. On the third day of attack i.e. October, though the English made friendly overtures before the Maratha bands, but they kept on receiving the threatening alarms of the latter. Streyn shown master was wise enough to secure the safety of the company's goods and also the lives of many men. He decided to send a present to Shivaji consisting of scarlet, cloth, sword blades, knives etc besides a large amount in rupees. The present was sent by two of the servants of the company. The Factory records mention "The Raja sent for them and received them with the Peshkash in a very kind manner, telling them that 'the English and he were goods friends, and putting his hand into theirs he told them he would do the English no wrong and that this giving his hand was better than any cowl [promise or agreement] to oblige him there unto'. English Factories in India, 1670-77, pp.196-97.

³ Charles Fawcett, op.cit, p.198.



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though it was not Known on what conditions and terms.¹ The Marathas invaded the place, where the Tartar ruler was staying. The Tartars could save their lives but left the building at the mercy of Shivaji's troops. The English factory was well defended and the Marathas could not lay their hands on it, so they settled for a Peshkash.²

Shivaji's attack on Surat in 1670 once again exposed the utter lack of will on the part of the local Mughal administration to put up an effective resistance to Shivaji. No effort seems to have been made by them to defend the city. As noticed by the English authorities present in the city, most of the Mughal officials fled the city. Those who chose to stay on made their individual arrangements to defend themselves. There does not appear to lie a concerted Mughal policy to face the challenge posed by Shivaji and ward off the attack on Surat.

It were only the English who put up a tough resistance to safeguard their merchandise. While Marathas were plundering the city of Surat; many of its residents took refuge at Sawally marine. It is interesting to note that *Shahbander* and the *Qazi* of the city had also taken refuge there. Most of the eminent merchants of

¹ The Dutch account of the affairs corroborates this, saying that, by valuable presents, they had obtained from Sivaji's representative the declaration that they should be free from molestation. Charles Fawcett, *op.cit.*, p.195.

² The Dutch account of the affairs corroborates this, saying that, by valuable presents, they had obtained from Sivaji's representative the declaration that they should be free from molestation. Charles Fawcett, *ibid*, pp. 195-197.

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Surat; including Muslims, Armenians and Bahyas had fled to the port under the protection of the English.¹

During the period that elapsed between 1670 to 1680, Surat could not recover from the Maratha terror.² It resulted into the disruption of trade and the merchants of Surat along with the English and Dutch companies suffered immensely. Many of the goods that English company brought out from England remained undisposed off. There was also considerable difficulty in dealing with the gold and silver received owing to the insecurity during the last quarter of the year. It was proposed to coin the treasure at Surat, but the council were forced to keep it at Swally, not daring to risk the danger of sending up such a tempting commodity. The Surat *tanksall* (*mint*) was also constantly closed owing to the frequent alarms. In these circumstances an attempt to get the company's creditors to accept payment in bullion naturally failed.³

¹ While Surat was experiencing the blows of Maratha attack, some of its residents who had taken refuge at Suwali Marine spent anxious time hearing the continuous alarms of the enemy coming down to the port. But as it was spring tide and the river therefore could not be for ded, Shivaji was unable to send any party of his army to Suwali. Charles Fawcett, Op.cit, p. 197.

² On 5th October, the third day of Maratha attack, Shivaji had called off his army, though he did not face any resistance or opposition from the Mughal army. it is in this connection that the English council in its letter says : 'he had got plunder enough and thought it prudent to secure himself and that 'before he marched away, he sent letter to the officers and chief merchants of the city do the effect that, if they did not pay him an annual tribute of twelve lakhs of rupees, he would return the next year and burn down to remaining part of the town. Shivaji had hardly departed from the city when the poorer classes at Surat fell to plundering what was left, so much so that there was not a house great or small, except those which stood on their guard, which was not ransacked. Even Master had some trouble with his seamen who could hardly be prevented from plundering *English Factories in India, 1670-77*, p.197.

³ Charles Fawcett, Op cit, p.200



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Trade between Surat and Persia also suffered as due to the disturbances at Surat. Persians did not dare to send ships at their own risk. Aungier in his letter of 21 November, summed up the situation as follows :

"The care of all men at present is met what they shall get by trading, buying and selling, but what they can save from fire and plunder by hiding and running away. Eminent merchants have suffered not only here but elsewhere, so that the cittys of Agra, Dilly, Brampore, Orungabad and Ahmedavad, the only marts of trade in India, are in the same condition with us here, caused by the fatal jealousies between the present Great Mogull Orengezeb and his Sonne Sultan Mazem, now prince of Orangabad, who in defense of his life, often attempted by his father, stands up on his guard with a vast army and privately setts on Sevagy with other Rashboots and Jentues to rebel against him, at whose outrages he winkes but hitherto hath not offered any open act of hostility against his father : How long things will stand thus between them, wee are not able to foresee, but certaine it is that till a firme peace be settled trade cannot recover the lively vigour it had before."¹

Fear of another incursion by Shivaji seem to have continued throughout the year. Besides frequent scares of such kind the disturbances caused by the hostilities between Shivaji and the Mughal forces caused considerable obstruction to trade.

¹ Charles Fawcett, Op cit, p.203-204



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Aurangzeb sent Mahabat Khan to the Deccan with an army of 40,000 in Deccan men against Shivaji and though hostilities took place mainly in Deccan but the general insecurity affected trade in and near Surat. Aungier writes "Thus in September there was a difficulty in getting goods from Dabhoi to Broach (a distance of about thirty miles), as the wayes are so dangerous that no Shroff will insure the goods. Between January and May Mahabat Khan had advanced from Burhanpur to Nasik and this affected towns with which Surat traded."¹ Even trade to foreign ports was affected, and freights for Persia and Basra was very low.²

The letters of the English clearly depict the inability of the imperial authority in dealing with the Maratha problem. Such a situation led the *nazim* of the Suba to adopt his course of action in wake of fresh Maratha attacks. In the middle of 1672 A.D. information reached that the Maratha forces under Moro Pandit had taken Jawahar (near Thana) from the *kolis* and this was followed by the news of the capture of Ramnagar. Messengers arrived with letters from Shivaji, demanding for the third time the *chauth* or fourth part of the revenue, amounting to four lakhs of rupees. The message ended with a threatening note that if this

¹ Charles Fawcett, Op cit, p.208.

² Describing the effects of the hazardous activities of the Marathas on trade the Factory record says that "Even the coral, the sale of which had been arranged at the beginning of June, remained undisposed off, and merchants would not buy goods 'in these times of rains and the danger the town is in. There was however, one important transaction effected in June. Mirza Muazzam was at last prevailed on to take delivery of the broad cloth he had bought in the previous year, and the compensation to be allowed him for damaged cloth was settled. On the other hand, he resisted all attempts to get him to take the perpetuanos lying in the factory, and the town was so glutted with cloth that difficulties in disposing of fresh stock were bound to occur." pp.209,222

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was not sent speedily, he would march up with his army and he bid them make ready a large house for him, for he would come and sit down here, and receive the rents and customs, for there was none now to stop his passage.¹

What Shivaji conveyed was not without substance as Mahabat Khan, the commander of the Mughal Army, after his defeat near Salher had retired to Aurangabad. The other two Mughal generals, Bahadur Khan and Diler Khan had been forced by Shivaji to beat a hasty retreat from Poona, and Shivaji with Ramnagar, guarding an easy route to Surat had, as he called it, 'the key of his treasury in his pocket.'²

Realizing the danger, the *nazim* of the Suba convened a meeting of all the eminent Hindu and Muslim merchants and proposed collecting a sum of Rs.45,000 to raise 500 horses and 3,000 foot for the defence of the town for two months. This was agreed to, but not apparently carried out. The English council wrote that they heard of no soldiers being employed but these are officers employed in taking an account of every Baniya house in town, of which the Governor no doubt will make good employment to his particular benefit. On the arrival of Shivaji's letter a panic rose among all men of property, who wanted to send their families out of Surat. The Governor at first gave them leave to do so, but withdrew it the next day and summoned another meeting to

¹ Charles Fawcett, Op cit, p.220.

² Charles Fawcett, Op cit, p.221.

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consider how to meet Shivaji's demand for money. He proposed that the merchants in the city should collect one lakhs of rupees and the *desais* for the several *parganas* should raise two lakhs from those who tilled the land. This was declared to be impossible. After a long deliberation it was decided to raise Rs.60,000 to be sent to the enemy with a promise for the remainder. But the merchants apprehending this as a piece of his craft, rather to enrich himself than to do a means to divert the enemy, sent him word that it could not be, and so broke up.¹

The above account makes it amply clear that not only there was an absence of any coherent Mughal policy to meet the Maratha menace in Surat even after two such attacks, even the people had lost confidence in the credibility of Mughal officials.²

¹ Charles Fawcett, Op cit, p.221, M.S. Commissariat, Op cit, p.293-294.

² The letters written by streynsham Master at Surat to the council at Suwally Marine reveal that the Mughal officials were taking advantage of the prevailing chaos due to maratha raids. 'On the 17th of November 1670, these were rumours of the approach of an army within sight of the town, which caused 'a very hot alarm - all the people running out of the towne with bag and baggage over one another backs'. All the peons at the factory vanished, and Master asked for twenty more men and took steps to strengthen its defences. He also had most of the goods that remained in the factory put on boats to send them down to swally; but the governor refused to pass them unless ready money were paid for the customs on than. Master's letter of 21st November contains a vivid account of an interview he had with the governor on the subject 'He said we must pay ready money : I replied we would pay as we used to do there 60 years, viz a year after : he asked if we had a written authority for this from the kind [Aurangzeb] : I said if had never been required before, and we looked on the governor as representing the king . he said we might look upon him also in that way. I asked what order he had from the king to ring new customs upon us : he had from the king to bring new customs upon us : he asked what we were I told him English, who had increased the trade here : he said the king had lost a lot by trusting people : I said he had never lost anything by trusting us, and if we owed him anything we were ready to pay, for we were not running away, but desired to drive out trade as formerly, and we had a lot of goods at swally, which we would not bring up, if he used us so badly. He made no reply and immediately rose and went to his pallenkeon to seek Niaght chaune [Inayet khan], who had arrived that day. I followed and told him, if our goods were lost, he should answer for it, and so we parted. When he was gone, I made a small noise and muttering of discontent at hard usage in these times of danger, that the people should take notice of it, and so returned here' Charles Fawcett, op.cit, pp. 198-199.

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The fact that the *nazim* of the *suba* thought in terms of making extra realisations from the merchants of Surat to raise an additional army to meet the Maratha attacks indicates that sufficient force was not available with him to meet the situation. This is also a reflection on the part of the central authority that it was unable to make adequate arrangements for the defence of Surat. The lack of a concerted policy of defending Surat becomes amply clear when even the proposal to raise an additional army was also abandoned and an alternative recourse of making payment of ransom to the Marathas was put forward by the *nazim*.

It was this uncertainty about the safety of Surat and the lack of confidence in the administrative capability of the Mughals, it appears, which was responsible for the shifting of the English Company's headquarters from Surat to Bombay during this period.¹

Even the death of Shivaji in 1680 could not bring any respite to the Suba from the Maratha attacks as the latter had gained much strength by this time. In 1706 Marathas made incursions in Gujarat under their leader Dhana Jadhav. The alarms of the Maratha attacks had been received earlier in 1704 around Surat and Prince Mohd. Azam, the then *nazim* of the Suba, was ordered to deal with them. However, in the year 1706 Prince Azam relinquished his charge as the *subedar* of the province on the

¹ Haji Zahid Beg's son, [mentions the Surat letter], the richest merchant in Surat, declared his resolution with an oath in the presence of Governor Aungier and Matthew Gray that he would go with his family to Bombay. We hope you will believe we did not discourage him therein. M.S. Commassorit, Op.cit., p.287.

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pretext of unsuitable climatic conditions¹ which does not appear to be a very convincing reason. Thus, when the Marathas led their attack in 1706 the new *nazim* Ibrahim Khan had not arrived and the province was without a regular *subedar*. When the reports of the march of Marathas reached the *naib* of the *suba* Abdul Hamid Khan, from letters of Surat port, he collected a force comprising of the various *faujdar*s, *mansabdars* and *thanadars*. The further course of events illustrate very clearly the inefficiency and degradation in the army. Mentioning about the march of the force collected by the *naib*, *mirat* says, "it was astonishing that they indulged in pleasures on the river bank till then negligently and did not proceed to Surat to perform royal duties. It was not proper Abdul Hamid Khan was temperamentally hasty in affairs. A curry-comb leader of an army did not think of multiplicity of the enemy and paucity of companions. Whatever he could and whatever war material he could obtain, he came out for march. Many *mansabdars* who had no horse to ride hired carriages and carts and accompanied him A watch of the day had passed when they encamped near Ratanpur on the bank of Narbada finding it to be a suitable place and a charming plain. Every commander pitched his tent according to his disposition and habit as well as that pleased his temperament. They did not observe caution and care of camping at one place ... Gujarati soldiers had

¹ Ali Mohd. Khan, Op.cit, p.357.



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no occasion to deal with and fight with the enemy. They had not adopted the mode and fashion of their warfare¹."

The Marathas overpowered the Mughal forces and the *naib* of the *suba* along with the *mansabdars* was made captive. The ransom was fixed for each of the captive. The imperial authority did not intervene at this juncture. Three lakhs of rupees were fixed as ransom for Abdul Hamid Khan. He wrote to his *peshkars* and servants for the arrangement of the sum. The sum was collected not only from his relatives but from his treasure also. When Aurangzeb came to know of these arrangements he issued a royal order to Mohd. Beg Khan to the effect that "You should not allow any man of the Diwan as far as possible to spend [even] a rupee from the treasury. A bond should be taken in this respect from Kandas the *peshkar* of the Diwan. The *naib* Diwan should be empathetically informed that revenue of the *khalisa* land and balances are fixed. Not a *dam* or a *dirham* should be given to the Diwan's *peshkar* from revenue of the *khalisa* land and the royal *Jagir*. Money due to the king should be remitted as usual to the treasury. It should be sent to his majesty in the form of *hundis*. A bond should also be taken in this respect from the *naibs* : expenses of establishment of the Suba's *naib* should be paid from the conditional revenue of the *nazim*. In short Abdul Hamid Khan

¹ Ali Mohd. Khan, Op cit, p.361.



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remained in the captivity of the Marathas for some time and was freed only after the payment of the ransom"¹.

Prince Mohammad Bedar Bakht was sent to Gujarat under a royal order for defence of the Suba until the arrival of the new *nazim*. However, Prince's request for sending more forces from the Court to deal with the Marathas was not granted. Instead, Aurangzeb wrote to the Prince "Not a single person can be sent from here Gujarat is rich in soldiers. All of them or most of them are soldiers"². Thus, the court refused to provide adequate military assistance to the *nazim* and the Suba succumbed to the pressure of the Marathas. This was the phase when the central authority was passing through a number of difficulties. Aurangzeb's hands were drawn into the political development of his time namely the Deccan expedition, the Rajput problem and the Sikh uprising. In the wake of these problems the imperial authority could not keep proper co-ordination with the provincial administration.

The failure of the Mughal officers to defend Surat against the Marathas was rooted in the weakening of the imperial administration in the *suba* at large. It appears that the gravity of these attacks could not be truly gauged by the Mughal Court and thus adequate provisions could not be made for the defence of Surat. It clearly demonstrated the slackening of the imperial

¹ Ali Mohd. Khan, Op cit, p.367-68.

² Ibid, p.370-71.

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control over the administration of the *suba*. The details of the state of administration is discussed in the next chapter.



CHAPTER - 2

ADMINISTRATION

GENERAL ADMINISTRATION :

Suba Gujarat under Aurangzeb was passing through an administrative crisis arising out of the Maratha raids and the lack of a clear cut administrative policy to tackle them. An attempt has been made in this chapter to make an assessment of the nature of problems that suba Gujarat was facing during this period.

By the beginning of the Eighteenth Century the devastating activities of the Marathas had started affecting the suba. Maratha raids not only caused a set back to the trade and commerce of the Suba but must have led to considerable dislocation of agrarian production. There are repeated references in *Mirat-i-Ahmadi* to the plundering raids of the Marathas on towns and villages¹. Taking advantage of the situation of chaos and disorder the other turbulent elements like *Kolis* had also began to create disturbances in the Suba. They ravaged the town of Baroda for two days². The imperial authority could not pay much attention to the problems of the Suba and were generally left to be tackled by local officials who were often unable to meet the situation. The Maratha attack on the Suba Gujarat under their leader Dhava Jadav in the year 1706 is a glaring example of the inapt handling

¹ Ali Mohd. Khan, Op.cit, pp.359-366.

The author says that Marathas plundered towns and villages and exacted *Khandali*.

² Ibid, p.366



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of the Suba. It is significant to note that at the time of Maratha attack the *suba* was without a powerful *subedar*. Prince Mohd. Azam Shah who had been earlier appointed as the Subedar was given permission to go to Burhanpur by a royal order though the Maratha depredations around Surat had started by then.

A vivid description of the utter chaos and complete disorder in the Suba at the time of Maratha attack of 1706 has been provided by the author of *Mirat-i-Ahmadi*. When the report of the march of the Marathas reached *naib subedar* Abdul Hamid Khan, he appointed *mansabdars*, *faujdars* and *thanedars* and ordered them to march to Surat port. The author states, "It was astonishing that they indulged in pleasures on the river bank till then negligently and did not proceed to Surat to perform royal duties" They were under the impression that the Surat port is a place of safety and that the port officer had an army with him... "Many mansabdars who had no horse to ride hired carriages and carts and accompanied him (Abdul Hamid Khan)"... "They had not adopted the mode and fashion of their warfare. On mere information they grappled with them in all haste"¹.

The Marathas overpowered the Mughal forces and the *naib* and few *mansabdars* were made captives. Ransom was fixed for each of the captives but the imperial authority did not make any attempt to get the captives released. Three lakhs of rupees were fixed as ransom for Abdul Hamid Khan by the Marathas. He wrote

¹ Ibid, p.366-367.



to *peshkars* and his other servants for arrangement of the amount and sending it to Ahmadabad. It is interesting is to note that when the emperor came to know of this he issued a royal order to Muhammad Beg Khan to the effect that "It is heard that Abdul Hamid Khan writes with compulsion or with force in respect of sending money to him from the royal treasury as well as the Prince's treasure. You should not allow any man of the Diwan as far as possible to spend a rupee from the treasury. A bond should be taken in this regard from Kandas Peshkar of the Diwan. The Naib Diwan should be emphatically informed that revenue of the Khalsa land and balance (*baqi*) are fixed. Not a *dam* or *dirham* should be given to the Diwan's *peshkar* from revenue of the Khalsa land and the royal Jagir. Money due to the king should be remitted to the treasury as usual. It should be sent to his majesty in the form of *hundis*. A bond should also be taken in this respect from the *naibs*. Expenses of establishment of the *suba's naib* should be paid from the *mashrut jagir* of the Nazim." In short, Abdul Hamid Khan remained in Maratha captivity for some time till the payment of a ransom.¹

In such a situation, when the *suba* was without a *subedar* or even a *naib*, some of the officials like the *Bakhshi*, the *Sadr* and the *Qazi* following their own course of action called Mohammad Beg Khan the then appointed *faujdar* of Sourath to Ahmedabad for making arrangements of defence. By the time emperor ordered

¹ Ibid, pp.367-368.



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Prince Bedar Bakht to reach Ahmedabad and expel the Marathas, the Marathas had left the place but not without ravaging some parganas and villages. Ali Mohammed Khan informs that "the news of Prince's march to this Suba continuously reached from Jhabua. On knowing this and also because season of their return had set in, they marched to vicinity of Surat port and round about the city-wall and attacked places but they failed."¹

It seems that nearly three lakhs and eighty thousand rupees were advanced from the provincial treasury for making defensive arrangements against the Marathas, however a royal *farman* issued in this connection gives an impression that the money was not spent properly. It has been laid out in the *farman* that "His Majesty should be informed in detail as to what they did with the amount. Where was it spent?" Numan Khan the *Bakhshi* of the Suba was reprimanded with decrease in mansab.² The whole episode dealing with the Maratha problem creates an impression that the mismanagement and inefficiency had crept into the Mughal administration. Though the Maratha depredations had taken place earlier also but this was for the first time that the administrative officials were being made captive by the Marathas. The imperial authority neither intervened at this juncture nor sent any aid to secure the release of the officials taken captive.

¹ Ibid, pp.366,367,369.

² Ibid, p.371.



realpatidar.com Prince Mohammad Bedar Bakht was sent to Gujarat under a royal order for the defence of the Suba till the arrival of the new Nazim. Prince's request for sending more forces from the Court to tackle the Maratha problem was however not granted. In reply to the request of Prince Bedar, Aurangzeb writes "Not a single person can be sent from here ... Gujarat is rich in soldiers. All of them or most of them are soldiers"¹ It was under these circumstances that the Suba of Gujarat succumbed to the pressure of the Marathas.

A number of other instances also suggest the loosening of the administrative machinery of the Suba. We find an increase in the number of intermediaries or local officials who often violated the rules set up by the state.² It has been amply brought out by the sources that the emperor issued a number of *farmans* prohibiting the illegal exaction of various cesses, but these orders carried little weight with the officials. *Mirat* cites an instance which is indicative of the disregard of the state regulations by the imperial officials. The event recorded is of the year 1697-98.

Similarly, in the year 1704, Abdul Hamid Khan, on the transfer of Purdil Shirani, was appointed the *faujdar* of Baroda. On his dismissal the Faujdari of the Pargana of Bijapur was granted to Safdar Khan Babi, and Sarandaz Khan, on the transfer of Muhammad Beg Khan, was appointed the *faujdar* of Sourath.

¹ Ibid, pp.370-371.

² A *farman* cited in the *Mirat-i-Ahmadi* point out that "affairs of Khanbayat port have reached to such a pitch due to large number of *Kanungos* that many merchants have left the port and gone over to Surat." p. 262.



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Muhammad Beg Khan was appointed as the *faujdar-i-gard*. When Aurangzeb came to know of these appointments he issued a royal *farman* stating that "If an offence was committed by Purdil Shirani, which became the cause of his dismissal, a proposal about it should have been made to His Majesty. *Sourath* is not a place of low mansab. Men of high mansab upto five thousand have been appointed to this post. Nazims of Dekhan and Bengal are permitted to dismiss and appoint persons because they are distant from the capital. In spite of his Majesty being very near, dismissal of *faujdar*s appointed by his majesty without his order and appointment of others in their place, especially that of the Diwan of the Suba as a *faujdar*, is unacceptable. These matters are causes of amazement as having been done by your exalted self [Prince Mohd. Azam]"¹. Suggesting some amendments Aurangzeb further ordered : "Dholqa is in *Khalsa* and situated near the city. Hence it is entrusted to him. [Prince Azam]. Faujdari of Baroda is granted with an additional mansab to Muhammad Beg Khan. Faujdari of neighbourhood of Ahmedabad is to be allotted by him to other imperial servants along with the servants of the *sarkar*. *Sourath* was granted in jagir to the representatives of the Prince" ²

There are instances of irregularities in various departments of the government at the *suba* headquarters. *Qazi-ul-Quzzat* of the suba Khawaja Abdullah reported to his majesty in 1689 that "in

¹ Ibid, pp.354-355.

² Ibid, p.319



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balda Ahmedabad some footmen (*pyadas*) of judicial court office of *Chahal-o-yak* (taxes) and of the Diwani etc. voluntarily serve without salary and extract money from the residents of that place and harass them in various ways. They catch hold of people in the street and highways and extract from them something illegally."¹ An imperial order was therefore issued in the name of *Diwan-i-Suba* stating that "he [*Qazi-ul-Quzzat*] should write to the *mutasaddis* of the place that they should not patronize the footmen (*pyadas*) not in [regular] employment and the [regular] servants be strictly instructed not to realise anything from anyone. If they make collections they should be reprimanded and a report after personal investigation be submitted to the emperor".²

The loosening of the administrative control in the *suba* proved advantageous to the officials at various levels. *Jagirdars* and other officials appeared to have (distributed) *madad-i-maash*, to the persons of their choice, a prerogative reserved for the emperor. The *Qazi-ul-Quzzat* Khwaja Abdulla reported to the emperor that *Jagirdars* in *sarkar* Sorath had given such *madad-i-maash* lands to individuals while the actual grantees, were being harassed by officials in the enjoyment of such grants as they did not possess imperial *sanads* to that effect. The emperor in order to rectify the situation issued an order stating that the Diwan of the *suba* should inquire into the veracity of the

¹ Ibid, p. 319.

² Ibid, p. 319.



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claims [of *madad-i-maash* holders] and then issue them *sanads*.

In case they [grantees] are unable to personally go to him, they may send their representatives with proof of their claim and they then be issued *sanads*."¹

It seems that some of the administrative offices such as *Diwani* and *faujdari* were becoming hereditary.² *Mirat* refers to various instances of hereditary succession to these offices. An interesting one is of Itimad Khan who was the *diwan* of the *suba* and the *mutasaddi* of *bandar* Surat. He appointed his son Sayed Muhsin as his *naib diwan* at Ahmedabad and after the death of Itimad Khan his son took over the charge of the *diwani* of the Suba. Later on he was made the *mutasaddi* of Khambayat and was given the title of his father.³ These instances clearly indicate the slackening of the imperial control over the administration of the *suba*. They also point out to the pulls and pressures of individual nobles exercised over the administration. In such a situation the checks and balances desired in the Mughal administration were being gradually undermined leading to the weakening of the imperial authority.

It is not that the imperial authority was oblivious of administrative irregularities that were being committed. It issued

¹ Ibid, Op. cit., p. 319

² Sayed Ahmad Baqir was appointed *faujdar* of Prantij and *thanedar* of Rasul nagar after the death of his father Sayed Kamal Khan, who was the *faujdar* of Idar. Kamal Khan Jalori had become *faujdar* and *jagirdar* of Palanpur after the death of his father. The rule of hereditary succession was also applied to the ecclesiastical posts. *Mirat* States that after the death of Shaikh Muhiyuddin the Sadr of the Suba Gujarat and *Amin-i-jaziya*, his son Shaikh Akramuddin was offered his father's post. Ibid, pp. 351, 343, 319.

³ Ibid, pp. 331, 333, 348.



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orders from time to time to rectify them. It is in this connection that a royal order was issued in 1696, to the Diwani officials of the *subas* of the empire with the seal of Asad Khan which stated that the *parwanas* pertaining to examination of matters issued to the Diwani officials as per the report of the *wazai* and *sawanih - nigar* were not replied in time. It was therefore stated in the *farman* that "care should be taken that reply of the *parwanas* and imperial communications be sent with proper details so that the matter enquired into by His Majesty is not delayed."¹

Another *farman* was issued in 1696 in connection with the maintenance of *dak-chaukis* since it was not maintained properly. This problem was highlighted by a mace-bearer, who brought it to the notice of the emperor that he had to cover a long distance on foot as the *dak-horses* were not present at the *dak-chauki*. The *farman* also indicates that the dead horses were not being replaced by the *faujdars* as it has been stated in the *farman* issued to the Diwan of the Suba that "*dak-chauki* horses were to be maintained by *faujdars* and they were to replace the dead horses so as to stop the delay of royal orders".²

The developments of this period also suggest that merchant class in concurrence with the other officials (new writers, chroniclers) though not connected with *diwani* had started meddling into the financial matters.³

¹ Ibid, pp. 334-335

² Ibid, p.335.

³ Ibid, pp. 260-315



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It was reported in the year 1695 to the emperor "that the shroffs of Ahmedabad by mutual concurrence have been issuing coins of less weight. They make payment in short-weighted coins but realize two to three *tankas* [as depreciation cess] per rupee while accepting them as payments from the poor and destitutes of that place resulting in loss to the destitutes." ¹

The nature of these problems points towards the slackening of the imperial authority at the Suba. Taking advantage of the situation it seems, the merchant class was also trying to gain in strength by entering into relationship with minor officials of the suba. The disorder in the province it seems had began to affect every branch of administration. A severe famine broke out in Gujarat due to the scarcity of food in the year 1681. It appears that the administration could not control the dearness of corn and high prices of cereals. The situation went out of control and people revolted against the administrative authorities. ²

There is an indication that in 1702 a section of soldiery revolted in Ahmedabad demanding salary. ³ The nature of this uprising can not be ascertained as there is only a brief reference to it in the *Mirat*. The reaction of Khwaja Abdul Hamid Khan, the *diwan* of the *suba*, however, suggests that the incident was

¹ Ibid, p 337.

² Ibid, pp.300-301.

³ Ibid, p.345.



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serious. He reported it to the emperor and took measures for the protection of the town.¹

LAND REVENUE ADMINISTRATION :

In this section an attempt is made to examine the functioning of the land revenue administration in *suba* Gujarat during the period of Aurangzeb. The focus is therefore not layed on the structure of the revenue administration as it has already been studied in detail by scholars.² It may however, be worthwhile to mention that the basis of Mughal land revenue administration was laid by the systematic land surveys undertaken by Raja Todar Mal, the imperial *diwan* of emperor Akbar.³ The entire *suba* of Gujarat, however, could not be surveyed by Todar Mal and hence the *zabt* system could not extend to the whole of the *suba*.⁴

¹ Ibid., p.345.

² Irfan Habib, *Agrarian system of Mughal India*, Bombay, 1963, N A. Siddiqi, *Land Revenue System Under the Mughals*, Bombay, 1970, Ibn Hasan, *The Central Structure of the Mughal Empire*, London, 1936.

³ Abul Fazl mentions that Sorath was excluded from the measured area, cf. *Ain-i-Akbari* Vol II, (tr. H.S. Jarret, New Delhi, 1978,) p. 257.

⁴ Ali Mohd Khan, op.cit., p. 25. A collection of *diwani* records termed as *Diwan-Nu-Khata-Nu-Pustak* (in the Apparao Bholanath Collection) at B.J. Institute of Learning and Research Ahmedabad provides useful information pertaining to revenue statistics of Suba Gujarat under Aurangzeb. According to *Khata*, during the Mughal period two land surveys were conducted, first under Akbar undertaken by Raja Tadarmal and second under Aurangzeb undertaken by Shihabuddin Khan. It reproduces emperor Aurangzeb's *farmān* of 1682, which identifies the parganas which had not been covered by land survey and asks the *diwan-i-suba* for undertaking measurement of the unsurveyed areas. Thus, to the survey conducted by Raja Todarmal and Shahabuddin were added area figures of a few paraganas, which for the first time were surveyed during Aurangzeb's reign. Shaukatullah Khan, 'An Important Persian Source on Mughal Gujarat. *Diwan-Nu-Khata-Nu-Pustak*', Quarterly Journal of Pakistan Historical Society, Karachi, 1998, p. 53.



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It is mentioned that under the last sultan of Gujarat, the province comprised of twenty five *sarkars*. After the conquest of Gujarat by Akbar, the number of *sarkars* were reduced to sixteen as nine *sarkars* were either transferred to other *subas* or were conceded to the Portuguese and one of them to Malik Ambar.¹ Of the remaining sixteen *sarkars*, nine were related to the *diwani* of the *suba*. They included *sarkars* of Ahmadabad, Patan, Baroda, Bharuch, Nadot, Champaner, Godhra, Sorath and Islam Nagar.² *Sarkar* Surat was controlled and administered by the *mutasaddi* of Surat and was thus excluded from the *diwani* of the *suba*. Out of the nine *sarkars* mentioned above, *sarkars* of Godhra, Sorath and Islam nagar could not be surveyed. Six *sarkars*, Dungarpur, Bansbala (Banswada), Kuchh, Sirohi, Sunth and Ram Nagar were *peshkashi* or under the possession of autonomous Chieftains.³

The assessment of revenue from the parganas was determined on the basis of measurement figures and the quality of land. In the remaining *mahals* the state's share of the produce was fixed by crop sharing or *batai*. With regard to the method of assessment prevalent in Gujarat, *Ain* furnishes the information that Gujarat was mostly *nasaqi* and measurement was rarely practised⁴. Keeping in view the data provided by the *Ain* in this

¹ Ali Mohd. Khan, Op. cit, p.24.

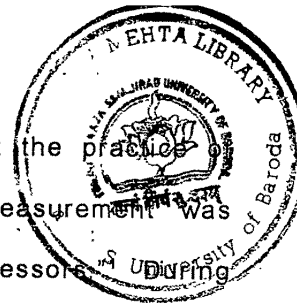
² Nawanagar, was annexed by Aurangzeb in 1662 and was renamed Islam Nagar.

³ Ali Mohd. Khan, Op. cit., p. 25.

⁴ Abul Fazl, *Ain-i-Akbari*, p.485. See the regulations drafted by Todarmal in the 27th year of Akbar. For the measurement of land it says. " It is known that in the parganas of the Khatia the recorded area (*arazi*) is less every year. (Therefore) when the cultivated land has once been measured, they shared increasing it (the area measured) from year to year, establish a partial *nazaq*? (*Ain-i-Akbari*, Vol.II, pp.382).



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connection, Irfan Habib states that "in Gujarat the practice of assessing land revenue on the basis of measurement was superseded partially at least under Akbar's successors. During the period of Aurangzeb, it has been calculated that out of a total number of 10,370 villages only 3,924 could be covered under measurement while the total measured area was, 1,27,49,374 bighas. The rest of the villages were *nasaqi*.²

It appears that measurement was not taken up annually and the figures of the area once measured in a locality continued to be accepted in subsequent years to serve as a basis for *zabt* in the measured (*amali*) areas as per the Todarmal bandobast. In areas where land survey had not taken place (*ghair-amali*) assessment was made on crop sharing basis.³ These methods of assessment seem to have continued even during Aurangzeb's period.

The *Mirat-i-Ahmadi* provides substantial information on various aspects of revenue administration. One of the documents cited in the work, a *farman* issued by Aurangzeb in the year 1669-70 to Mohammad Hashim, the Diwan of the *suba* throws a lot of light on the revenue administration of the *suba*.⁴ It also provides information on the malpractice's that had crept in the revenue administration.

¹ Irfan Habib, Op.cit, p.18.

² Ibid, p. 4.

³ See Aurangzeb's *farman* to Rasikdas Karori, referred by Jadunath Sarkar "Mughal Administration", Calcutta, 1935, pp.214-215.

⁴ Ali Mohd. Khan, Op cit, pp. 268-272.

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Three categories of revenue or Kharaj have been mentioned in Aurangzeb's *farman* to Mohammad Hashim.

(i) *Kharaj-i-Muazzaf* or the fixed revenue, wherein the peasant had to pay the fixed revenue at the rate of 50% of the total produce. The revenue demand was to be collected in cash only.¹

In case *Kharaj-i-Muazzaf* was adopted as a mode of assessment, the revenue demand was to be made only after the completion of the act of harvesting.²

(ii) *Kharaj-i-Muqasimah* or variable crop tax and apparently anonym with crop sharing.³ The taxation rate varied according to the productivity of land, the kind of crop sown and the condition of the peasant.⁴

(iii) *Kharaj-i-Muqtaat* : This was also levied in the form of a fixed demand. During Aurangzeb's period it was used as a device to persuade a cultivator to bring more land under cultivation. It was fixed at very low rate for a prescribed period to encourage the cultivator to work upon hitherto uncultivated land. The maximum demand never exceeded more than half of the produce.⁵ The

¹ I.H. qureshi, *The administration of the Mughal Empire*, Karachi, 1966, pp.164-165.

² Ali Mohd. Khan, Op cit, p.270.

³ Zafrul-Islam, 'Aurangzeb's Farman on Land Tax; Islamic Culture, April 1978, p 121

⁴ The *farman* issued to Rasikdars Karori confines a clause which lays down that in villages where the peasants were poor and distressed the land revenue was to be assessed on the basis of crop sharing and the share of the state was to be fixed at one half, one-third and even less than one third of the produce, J.N. Sarkr, Op. cit, p. 215.

⁵ Ali. Mohd. Khan, Op cit., pp. 268-272



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revenue rate as laid down by the *farman* is half or one third of the produce.¹

The regulations laid down that the revenue demand was to be fixed at a maximum of one half of the produce and that it was not to exceed this limit under any circumstance. In places where the land revenue demand had been fixed at more than one half of the produce, it was to be reduced. As a matter of principle the land revenue had to be fixed in accordance with the paying capacity of the peasant.²

It is also laid down that, whenever a change in the nature of the *kharaj* was to be made the consent of the cultivator was necessary.³ Remission in the payment of *kharaj* was made if the state was convinced that the cultivator was affected by any adverse circumstances.

Aurangzeb's *farman* to Mohammed Hashim also throws light on the cultivating classes. Two categories of cultivators are referred to in the *farman*. (i) *Arbab-i-Ziraat*, and (ii) *Arbab-i-Zamin* or *Malik*.

¹ *Kharaj-i-Muqtaat* in *Mirat-i-Ahmedi* Vol.I, ed.by Nawab Ali, p.268. Zafrul Islam who has used the same text for his work "*Aurangzeb's farman on Land Tax - an analysis in the light of fatawa-i-Alangiri*" has read this as *Kharaj-i-Muazzaf*, p.122. As has been stated above *Kharaj-i-Muqtaat* was used as a means to persuade a cultivator to expand the cultivable area by bringing more land under cultivation. The *farman* issued in respect of land tax makes a mention of this tax in connection of waste (cultivable) land to be brought under cultivation. Thus in all probability it appears to be *Kharaj-i-Muqtaat*.

² Ali Mohd. Khan, Op cit, pp.270-271

³ Ibid, p.270



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Arbab-i-Ziraat appears to be common cultivators and probably enjoyed no such rights as transfer or mortgaging of land.¹

Clause second of the *farman*, while referring to this class states "They (revenue officials) should acquaint themselves as far as possible with condition of every *arbab-i-ziraat* from the commencement of the year as to who has withdrawn himself from cultivation inspite of the fact that he has the ability to cultivate. They should persuade and encourage him. If they need concessions in certain affairs, they be granted. If it is found out after investigation that he has kept himself aloof from cultivation inspite of ability for it, he should be dealt with urgency and threat as well as imprisonment and beating."²

Arbab-i-Zamin appears to be the *maurusi-riyaya*. The regulations mentioned in the *farman* indicate that this class enjoyed proprietary rights over land and even if they fled leaving the land untitled and without paying the revenue, suitable provision was made to get the land tilled either through an *Ijaradar* or through other cultivating class. The ownership of the land reverted back to this class whenever they returned.³

The *arbab-i-zamin* have also been referred to as *malik*. The *malik* enjoyed proprietary rights over land. He retained a claim in the produce even when he did not cultivate the land or did not engage for land revenue assessed on the land entered against his

¹ N.A. Siddiqi, Op.cit, p.148.

² Ali Mohd. Khan, Op cit, pp. 268-69.

³ Ibid, pp 269-271.



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name as *malik*. Under these conditions his share amounted to the difference between the *malik's* original share of the produce and the amount paid to the state as land revenue. His right to bring back his land under cultivation or management remained even though he did not engage for the land revenue for some time. He enjoyed the right to sell his land or *malikana* rights in land. He could mortgage his land. The *malikana* right was hereditary.¹

The Mughal policy towards the peasants enjoying various types of hereditary rights in land, the class that S. Nurul Hasan called the Primary Zamindars, was of according protection to them against the oppression of the superior-right holders and officials. This concern is reiterated in the clauses of the *farman* cited above. The reiteration of this fundamental Mughal imperial policy by Aurangzeb through a *farman* to the Diwan of Gujarat indicates that probably it was the demand of the situation. The plight of the peasantry has been discussed elsewhere in this chapter.

Besides the cultivators there existed a number of *zamindars* ranging from autonomous chieftains to the petty intermediaries. As has been mentioned above, sixteen *sarkars* formed part of *suba* Gujarat after its annexation by the Mughal emperor Akbar in 1573 A.D. Among the sixteen *sarkars*, ten were *kharaji* and six were under in the possession of *zamindars* who paid *peshkash* to the imperial authority. *Sarkar* of Dungarpur, Bansbala, Kutch (addressed as Sulaimannagar), Sirohi, Sunt and Ramnagar were

¹ Ibid, pp.269,271, N A. Siddiqi, Op cit, pp.148-149.



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peshkashi.¹ *Sarkar* of Navanagar was annexed during the reign of Aurangzeb (1662) as stated above, following a dispute over succession and was named thereafter as Islamnagar. Before annexation it was *peshkashi* and it turned *kharaji* afterwards and was thus subjected to detailed assessment.² The *zamindars* of the *peshkashi sarkars* seems to have by and large paid *peshkash* directly to the treasury or through the *faujdar* of the *sarkar*.³ It was under exceptional circumstances that the *subedar* was obliged to exercise force for extracting tribute. The *peshkashi zamindars* have been referred as *zamindaran-i-umdah* and they were also under the obligation of providing military assistance to the *subedar* at time of need.⁴ The *peshkashi zamindars* made two types of payments to the Mughal authority the *Matalaba-i-sarkar-i-wala* (the claim of the emperor) and *Perhkash-i-nizamat* (the tribute for the governor). Both these payments were denoted by the term *peshkash-i-karsala*. It was collected in lieu of the military service.⁵ The *matalba-i-sarkar-i-wala* which was exacted from these *sarkars* by way of *peshkash* seems to have been calculated on the basis of *jama*.⁶

¹ Ali Mohd. Khan, Op cit, pp. 25, 175.

² Ali Mohd. Khan, Supplement *Mirati-Ahmadi*, pp. 219-21.

³ Ibid, pp. 224-5

⁴ Ali Mohd. Khan, Op.cit., p. 173.

⁵ See Shaukatullah Khan, "*Zamindars in the Mughal Suba of Gujarat during the first half of the 18th Century*", unpublished Thesis, Jawahar Lal Nehru University, 1993, p 72

⁶ Ibid, p.74.



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With regard to the obligation of paying *peshkash-i-nizamat* and *matalba-i-sarkar-i-wala* the position of the *zamindars* was at variance from each other. The *zamindar* of Bhuj enjoyed exemption from paying both the claims, however he was obliged to pay *peshkash* in the year 1659 on account of his rebellious act of giving refuge to Dara during the war of succession.¹

The *zamindars* of Banswada evaded the payment of *matalba-i-sarkar-i-wala* during the reign of Aurangzeb.² The raja of Sirohi who had once submitted before Akbar had assumed independence since the days of emperor Shahjahan.³ Before the close of the seventeenth century the *zamindar* of Ramnagar was placed under the authority of the *mutasaddi* of Surat who thereafter extorted tribute.⁴

It appears that the *zamindars* of the *peshkashi sarkars* endeavoured to abstain from serving the empire from the time of emperor Shahjahan. The *zamindar* of Sirohi presented himself before the *nazim* in the year 1648. Though Prince Dara issued a number of *nishans* asking the *zamindar* to reach the imperial court, but the *zamindar* did not turn up. From the year 1648 none of the *zamindars* of Sirohi came to see any *nazim*.⁵ The *zamindar* of Ramnagar and Surat had turned *peshkashi* during Shahjahan's reign. The *zamindar* of Dungarpur who was given the *mansab* of

¹ Ibid, p. 73.

² Supplement *Mirat-i-Ahmadi*, pp.216-18.

³ Ali Mohd. Khan, Op cit, p.303, Cf. Shaukatullah Khan, Op.cit, p.77.

⁴ Shaukatullah Khan, Op cit, p.77.

⁵ Ali Mohd Khan, Op cit, p.224. For a detailed discussion see Shaukatullah Khan, Op cit,p.69.



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1000/1000 by Aurangzeb however, continued to serve the empire till the close of the seventeenth century.¹ Thus, it appears that many of the *peshkashi zamindars* had been withholding the *peshkash* to the Mughals and had started asserting their sovereign rights over their territories.

Next to the *peshkashi* were the *ismi zamindars* who held land in the *kharaji* territories and paid *peshkash* by application of force. These related to the following areas : Rajpipla, (Ali) Mohan, Lunawada, Nawanagar, Baria, Bharai, Ranabao, Jhapa and Jhar mandvi.²

According to Noman Ahmad Siddiqi "these *sarkars* as a whole were subject to the payment of land revenue determined on the basis of a detailed assessment, and they were also administered by the Mughal officers. Within these *sarkars* however there were pockets of lands and villages and even parganas which were held by *zamindars* who paid *peshkash* instead of *malwajib*. The *zamindars* who held a number of villages or an entire pargana and paid *peshkash* were known as *ismi zamindars*. They were also required to render military service."³ Thus on the basis of this observation *peshkashi zamindars* could be classified into three categories. (a) the *zamindars* of an entire *sarkar* (b) the *zamindars* of an entire pargana or a large number of

¹ Supplement, *Mirat-i-Ahmadi*, p.188. Cf. Shaukatullah khan, Op.cit, p. 69.

² *Mirat-i-ahmadi* Supplement, pp. 225-25. Shaukatullah Khan, op.cit. p.94 remarks : "These areas were guarded by hills and forests. Their lands were by and large situated on the outskirts of the *Kharaji sarkars* adjoining the territory of the *zamindaran-i-sarkarat-i-peshkashi*."

³ N.A. Siddiqi, op.cit, p. 23.



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villages known as *ismi zamindars* (c) petty *zamindars* who held a few villages.¹ It appears that the *ismi zamindars* did not enjoy same kind of autonomy which the *peshkashi zamindars* of the *sarkar* enjoyed. Their position was autonomous as they were subject to some degree of control by the imperial authority. The information provided by *Mirat* with regard to *ismi zamindari* clearly brings out this understanding. It mentions Navanagar as one of the *ismi* territory. Navanagar was one of the *peshkashi sarkars* which was declared *kharaji* in 1662 after its conquest by Aurangzeb. Its *zamindar* was allowed to retain a portion of the *sarkar* and came to be counted as *ismi*.²

The above account makes it clear that *ismi* denoted those *zamindars* who held territories in the *Kharaji* areas. These *sarkars* according to *Mirat* were under the possession of Girasia Rajputs, Kolis, Kathis, Jadejas, Rathors and Makwanas.³ Thus it appears that Rajputs held a dominating position in certain *sarkars*. Noman Ahmad Siddiqi was referring to this position when he noted that within a *Kharaji sarkar zamindaris* of various sizes were created comprising a village, more than a village and even a *paragana*. he further observes that within the *Kharaji sarkars* was a class of *zamindars* who can be designated as *banth* holders.⁴

¹ Ibid, op.cit., p 24

² Supplement *Mirat-i-Ahmadi*, pp.224-225.

³ Ibid, pp.224-225.

⁴ Ibid, pp. 224-225. Cf. NA. Siddiqi, op.cit, p. 23.



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It will be worthwhile here to examine the nature of *bantha* or *banth* or *wanta*. Scholars have expressed divergent views regarding the nature of *bantha* and its origin. B.R. Grover equates *banth* with *watan* jagir and he holds the view that Rajputs etc. were given one fourth of the territory known as *banth* as *watan* villages. He further says that revenues from *talpad* were paid as *peshkash* to the state.¹ Irfan Habib equates *bantha* with the *malikana* of North India and treats it as the share of *zamindar*.² N.A. Siddiqi too regards this to be the *watan* of *zamindar*.³ S. Nurul Hasan treats *bantha* with *nankar*, as the remuneration given to the intermediary *zamindars*.⁴ Shaukatullah Khan in his work has discussed *banth* at length. He observes that "every *zamindari* village (situated within the surveyed parts) including the *watan* of the superior *zamindars* is likewise divided into *talpad* and the *bantha*".⁵ His findings include the existence of two categories of physically divided land in the villages.⁶

Before dealing with the specific aspects of *bantha* that whether it was the division of assessed revenue or the land of the village or of the villages, it will be well to begin with the origin of this system. Most of the scholars are of the opinion that the origin of this system dates back to the Sultanate period of Gujarat. The

¹ B.R. Grover, 'Nature of Land Rights In Mughal India,' 1963, p.11

² Irfan Habib, Op cit, pp.149-50.

³ N.A. Siddiqi, Op cit, p 23.

⁴ S. Nurul Hasan, *Thought on Agrarian Relations In Mughal India*, New Delhi, 1990, p.32.

⁵ Shaukatullah Khan, Op cit, pp.149, 151.

⁶ Ibid, pp.151 For a detailed discussion see also pp.147-158.



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accepted view is that under the rule of the Sultans the Rajputs and Kolis were subdued and they agreed to render military service and pay *malguzari* or land revenue. Sultans made an arrangement with the Rajputs and Kolis that *mahsul* of one fourth of *watans* and villages should be left to them for purpose of maintenance. Three parts of the *mahsul* known as *talpad* was to remain with the state.¹

Mirat informs that this settlement was made with the *zamindaran-i-umdah*, who had most of the parganas in their possession and it was also a part of settlement that *zamindars* were to serve the state and provide military contingents in times of need. In this way, the Kolis and Rajputs guarded the villages in which they had one fourth part of land. They enjoyed their *banth* and gave something every season to the jagirdar by way of *salami*.²

The origin of this system however, appears to date back to the early medieval period, when the division of the village was undertaken to distinguish different clans. Research carried out on this aspect reveals that the *wanta* and *talpad* were considered two distinct villages for the purpose of administration. The Rajputs lived only in the *wanta*, part of the village site with their dependent castes, the *talpad* part was inhabited by the *kanbis* or *patidars* and their dependent castes. The *wanta* part had its own

¹ Ali Mohd Khan, Op cit, p.173

² Ibid, pp.173,174



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head who was called '*lhakur*' *talpad* land had its own headman called *Patel* or *Mukhi*.¹

From the above it appears that during the early medieval times settlements were clean based. *Mirat-i-Sikandari* provides some significant information regarding the nature of *bantha*. "Sultan (Mahmud Shah II) made a determination to conquer the territory of Malwa. In this regard he consulted Asaf Khan, the *vazir*, who replied 'I will indicate to you the conquest of a territory which in no way is less than the kingdom of Malwa and it is this : that one fourth of your kingdom which is called *bantha* is occupied by *girasia* Rajputs. If you take this fourth part from them *twenty* to twenty five thousand *sawars* may be given *jagirs* in that territory This will be the cause of increase in the [strength of the] army and then the conquest of Malwa will become much easier.' The Sultan headed for the conquest of the *giras* territories (*Mahal-i-giras*). *Girasias* of Idar, Sirohi, Dungarpur, Bansbala, Lunawala, Rajpipla, on the bank of river Mahendari (Mahi) and Dahod etc, the Mewasi region on the border were targeted and it was the beginning of interference in these territories."²

The *Mirat-i-Ahmadi* mentions that as a consequence of a continuous pressure on the Rajputs and Kolis exercised by the sultan in Gujarat, they accepted the sultan's authority and agreed to pay revenue. They subsisted on a fourth part of their *watans*

¹ A.M. Shah, *Social Structure and Change in a Gujarat Village*, Unpublished Thesis, M S University, Baroda, 1964, p.24.

² Sikandar, *Mirat-i-Sikandari*, ed S.C. Misra and M.L. Rahman, Baroda, 1961, pp. 363-364.



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and villages called *banth* in the terminology of Gujarat and the remaining three parts called *talpad* related to the imperial government.¹

It is amply clear from the above passage that the area over which a *girasia* exercised his superior rights was restricted to one fourth of the total area which was called *bantha*. The sultan is advised by his Vazir to take away the superior rights of the *girasias* from the remaining areas over which they were exercising those rights. Nowhere in the passage there is a suggestion that one fourth, called *bantha*, was the share of the *girasia* or *zamindar*. Thus, it is difficult to accept Irfan Habib's interpretation of the *banth* as constituting 25% of share of the *zamindar* and its equation with the *zamindar's malikana* rights. The passage of the *Mirat-i-Ahmadi* cited above too is in consonance with our understanding of the nature of the *bantha* and the *talpad*.²

It is worth noting that these *girasia bantha* holders of the Gujarat sultanate are referred to as the *ismi-zamindars* during the Mughal period. Thus, the distinctiveness of their identity is recognized in some form even during the Mughal period.

The policy of the imperial Mughals towards the *raiyats* seems to be well formulated and this is clearly evident from the contemporary histories and documents such as *farmans manshurs parwanas* etc. issued in this connection from time to time. One

¹ Ali Mohd. Khan, Op.cit., p. 173.

² Shaukatullah Khan, Op.cit, p. 157 also holds similar views.



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such order shows Aurangzeb's concern towards the welfare of cultivating class and his policy of extending the area of cultivation. It has been laid out in the *farman* that "revenue officials should behave with courtesy with the *raiya*ts, inquire about their condition and make efforts with prudence so that the cultivating class may try for increased agricultural production with pleasantness and gladness by cultivating whatever is fit for cultivation. If the officials find out that the cultivators had no means to prepare themselves for cultivation they should be paid *taqavi* loans."¹

Certain new features in agrarian relations emerged during this period under the overall slackening of the imperial control over the administrative affairs of the *suba*. This, it appears, affected agricultural development in the *suba*. An increase in the number of intermediaries is discernible during this period. A *farman* cited in the *Mirat-i-Ahmadi* points out "Affairs of Khambayat port have reached such a pitch due to large number of *kanungos* that many merchants have left the port and gone over to Surat. People of round about places of the port have gone to distant places. They come to Ahmedabad (only) for sale and purchase. Before this it was ordered that there should be two *chaudharies* and two *kanungos* who should behave well and honestly with *raiya*ts. They should act according to the royal order".²

¹ Ali Mohd. Khan, Op.cit, p. 268.

² Ibid, pp.262.



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Various instances of the high handedness of the *jagirdars* and revenue officials have also been mentioned in the ~~sources~~¹. The revenue officials as well as *jagirdars* it seems had started disregarding imperial regulations and the peasants were harshly dealt with. *Mirat* mentions that the *jagirdars* and administrators used to make the assessment of the produce in an arbitrary manner. "If they made a settlement of half a share, they made the total upto two hundred and fifty *maunds* in place of hundred *maunds* and used to charge the revenue of both".¹ When this came to the notice of the emperor an order was issued showing concern for the peasants. "He worked very hard for the whole year to pay twenty five *maunds* of food stuff more by means of labour, they make them cultivate by beating and striking. They should exact according to the agreement of half a share and should not demand more".²

The tyrannical attitude of the revenue officials induced the peasant to flee from the land. Such instances are however very few. Thus at one place Aurangzeb instructs his officials to bring back those who had fled from their land. "It was reported to his Majesty this year (1672) that the *amils* of the *Khalisa* revenue office and the *jagirdars* molest the *rayaits* for the payments of arrears of previous years. Most of the persons who have to pay arrears have died, some of them have fled while those who are left

¹ Ibid, p.268.

² Ibid, p. 262.



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are without property, indigent and not in a position to pay. Action will be taken on orders from His majesty. His majesty ordered that the arrears of the past years in the *khalisa* parganas and *mahal* of *jagirdars* are condoned and written off. Those persons should not be troubled for collection of the same. Whatever is left to be paid by the *riaya* for the last year should be demanded from those who are there and are in a position to pay. Those who have fled¹ should be summoned. (when they come back), ~~the~~ they should not be molested".² The order makes it clear that the state could not afford the risk of the flight of the peasant as it would mean abandonment of cultivation leading to the loss of revenue to the state.

In case the peasant took to flight, the remedy adopted to meet such a situation was to give the land on *ijara* so that the cultivation should not suffer. Infact the system of *ijara* had become operative since the days of emperor Jahangir and continued till the later Mughal period. In *suba* Gujarat the practice of *ijara* seems to have been adopted on need basis and was not much encouraged by the imperial authority. When it was reported to emperor Aurangzeb that the *chaudharis* and *muqaddams* of *suba* Ahmadabad held parganas and *mauzas* in *ijara* which led to all kinds of oppression on the *riaya* the emperor issued an order in 1676 to the Diwan of the *suba* prohibiting the practice of *ijara* in

¹ The words used in the text are *faul-o-farari* which usually means 'dead and absconders'. However, what is obviously meant here is that the absconders be brought back for resettlement.

² Ali Mohd. Khan, Op cit, p.290.



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the *khalsa* and *jagir* lands. Prohibition was also issued against excessive demand and *abwab-i-malba*¹ from the *riaya*.² Similarly, there is an order contained in the *Nigar-Nama-i-Munshi* which provides for permission to farm out land in the *khalsa* lands subject to certain conditions. It provides for revenue farming of the villages where *jama* had decreased considerably.³ The inference that can be drawn from this evidence is that probably Gujarat did not have such areas where the *jama* had considerably decreased.

The statistical data showing *jama* of suba Gujarat may provide significant information pertaining to economy. A recent study has tried to draw some inferences regarding *jama* on the basis of *Mirat-i-Ahmadi*. According to the *Mirat*, the *hasil* of the suba amounted to Rs.60,000,00 during the past years (*sanawat-i-mazia*), Rs.100,000,00 during the perfect year (*sal-i-akmal*).⁴ "If the highest yield, obviously received during the year when cultivation was at its best, is converted into dams (12,356,00 x 40) we get a figure of 490,240,000 *dams*. This figure approximates 511,486,937 *dams* (inclusive of Islamnagar but exclusive of Surat), the *jamadami* for Aurangzeb's reign" (1706-7).⁵

¹ The term *abwab-i-malba* denoted the sundry village expenses which formed an item under the *abwab*.

² Ali Mohd. Khan, Op cit, pp.326-27.

³ N.A. Siddiqi, Op cit, pp 94-95

⁴ Ali Mohd. Khan, Op cit, p 26.

⁵ Ibid, p. 142, Shankatullah Khan, *Agricultural Statistics of Mughal India*, New Delhi, 1997, p.139. Irfan Habib, Op cit, p.326,



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The relevant information provided in this connection by Irfan Habib and Shireen Moosvi do not indicate any contraction in cultivation between 1595 and 1707.¹ Shireen Moosvi's observation suggests that the economy of Gujarat did not move in either direction. Though Shaukatullah Khan conforms to Moosvi's conclusion but his interpretation is subject to the condition (particularly for C.1707) that the *jama* had been revised in proportion to the revised rate on the basis of actually cropped area. This could not however be effected due to the non-availability of comprehensive data of cultivation and revenue with the imperial office.² Aurangzeb in his *farman* to Rasikdas complains that "the Court does not receive the records of the *arazi* of each pargana, specifying the cultivated land and details of the Rabi and Kharif crops ... and whether there has been any change i.e. an increase or a fall during the current year compared to the last year."³ Similarly in Gujarat, the *desais*, who were to prepare and keep records of revenue details, withheld information in connivance with the *jagirdars*.⁴ The *jagirdars* granted the *desais* revenue free lands (*pasaita*) out of their own *jagirs* and won their favour. Thus, in the absence of adequate data regarding the

¹ Shireen Moosvi, *Economy of Mughal Empire*, c. 1595, Delhi, 1987, pp.55-56.

² Shaukatullah Khan, Op cit, p.145. At the close of Aurangzeb reign (1707) the *jama* in respect of nine *Kharaji Sarkars* excluding Surat) stood at 49.17, 42,723 *dams* and subsequently (1707-1723) rose to 88, 62, 22, 611 *dams* thus reaching the climax. It was finally fixed at 86,00,00,000 *dams* sometime during the same period. Shaukatullah Khan, 'An Important Persian Source on Mughal Gujarat - *diwan-Nu-Khatanu Pustak*,' Journal of Pakistan Historical Society, Karachi, 1998, p. 54.

³ Shirin Moosvi, 'Aurangzeb's *farman* to Rasikdas,' *Medieval India*, ed Irfan Habib, Delhi, 1999, pp.200-201

⁴ Ali Mohd. Khan, pp 326-27, Shaukatullah Khan, Op cit, p.145.



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actual state of cultivation, the imperial authority could hardly assess a revenue demand which reflected the true state of cultivation.¹ In all probability under these circumstances the extent of cultivation C.1707 must have been however larger than estimated.²

The trends that have emerged during this period lead us to conclude that a large number of intermediaries, revenue officials and *jagirdars* were trying to assert their authority. The local officials often violated the established practices and regulations of the imperial government. The assertion of strength by the intermediaries vis a vis the smaller *jagirdars* and the harassment of the latter created a situation where the *jagirdars* too defied the imperial regulations. During the *nizamat* of Shujat Khan in some of the areas the *jagirdars* were not able to collect their dues from the intermediaries. When this was reported to the *nazim*, he appointed rent collectors (*sazawals*) to collect the dues from the *desais*.³

Though the loosening up of the administrative machinery is clearly visible from the various instances, still the situation had not reached such an extent that the administrative problems could go unnoticed. There are references which indicate that the emperor had taken notice of the grievances of the *raiyats*. He issued warnings several times to his officials that they should not

¹ Shaukatullah Khan, Op cit, p.145.

² Ibid, p.145.

³ Ali Mohd. Khan, Op cit, p. 327



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oppress the peasants and those who continued to do so were to face punishment in this regard. Abdur-Rahman, the *karori* of pargana Patan Dev was transferred due to complaints of raiyats.¹ In 1612 Aurangzeb issued an order to the Diwan of the *subah* that defaulters should not be fined, instead the *amils*, *zamindars* and other residents in the *mahal* should be punished with imprisonment, dismissal from service, expulsion and similar punishments.²

Another development during this period seems to be the interference of the merchants class into the administration. *Mirat* provides various instances in this connection. "*Sheths, kanungos and desais in the chabutra of every chakla in the city show ways and means of collecting taxes. They themselves are involved in collecting the taxes*".³ Similarly, it is reported "That the *muttasaddis, sheths, desais* of many *parganas* of the *subah* do not allow other persons to purchase new food grains (newly harvested) on its arrival. They purchase first. They give rotten and wasteful corn with force to merchants and realize per force from them the price of new stuff".⁴

Seventeenth century was the period when the Mughal empire had greatly expanded and due to the expansion several administrative problems had cropped up. This was also the time

¹ Ibid, p.305.

² Ibid, p.293.

³ Ibid, p.260.

⁴ Ibid, p.260.



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when the energies of the emperor Aurangzeb had been directed against the Marathas, the Sikhs, the Afghans who were constantly challenging the central authority. The system of checks and balances the hallmark of Mughal administration had began to erode. The absence of any major uprising of the *zamindars* in the *suba* however suggests that things had not reached the breaking point.



CHAPTER - 3

TRADE AND COMMERCE

Commodities And Manufactures:

The Province of Gujarat had attained the position of commercial eminence since centuries. During the Mughal period it was regarded as one of the most prosperous provinces of the Mughal empire. There were certain features peculiar to the economy of Gujarat i.e. the presence of the skilled mercantile community and its access to the sea, active inter-regional and foreign trade, suitable climate for the production of raw cotton and availability of agricultural surplus. All these factors made Gujarat a hub of commercial activity.

With the conquest of Gujarat by Akbar in 1573 AD the Mughal empire came to possess a considerable number of seaports. The author of *Mirat-i-Ahmadi* states that Suba Ahmadabad consisted of twenty five ports and forty five *badas*.¹ The important ports in the mainland like Surat and Cambay enjoyed a high volume of foreign trade. Keeping in view the mercantile and financial importance of these port towns, special arrangements were made to administer them.

The port of Cambay however, began to loose its eminence by the turn of the sixteenth century: The reason being the continuous

¹ Supplement *Mirat-i-Ahmadi*, p.239.



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problem of silting and the danger of tidal bore in the gulf¹. Surat situated on the main lines of International commerce attained the position of commercial eminence by the seventeenth century.

Referring to the importance of this port Ashine Das Gupta remarks "The pre-eminence of Surat among the ports in India was without doubt the gift of the Mughal empire. The problem of physical security was solved. The hinterland of the port now functioned with the support of continental land routes. And the Mughal empire nursed the annual pilgrimage to Mecca of which Surat was the port of embarkation".² It also acquired the distinction of being the seat of a royal mint during the reign of Jahangir.

Suba Gujarat specialised in the manufacture of cotton cloths. Surat had an easy access to the cotton producing areas and manufacturing centres of Gujarat and the Deccan. It served as the market of three small weaving towns within a radius of twenty miles - Bardoli, Navsari and Gandevi.³ Surat also exported large variety of goods such as calicos, silk, cotton yarn and imported bullion, Coral, broad cloth, ivory, vermilion, quick silver and metals such as copper, iron and lead. The city also obtained

¹ M.N. Pearson, *Merchants and Rulers in Gujarat*, New Delhi, 1974, p.10.

² Ashin Das Gupta, *Indian Merchants and the Decline of Surat*, Wiesbaden, 1979, p.3. Writing about Surat, after being made the head quarter of the East India Company Surendra Gopal says : "The choice of Surat as an entrepot of overland transit trade was well conceived. It was connected by road with Agra, the imperial capital as well as the focus of commerce of northern India and also with other parts of the empire. The easy accessibility of Surat by road facilitated transport of European and other commodities brought out of Gujarat for sale in adjacent areas". Surendra Gopal, *Commerce and Crafts in Gujarat*, p. 127.

³ *Factory Records Surat*, 1673, Vol. III, p.14.



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sufficient quantities of gold, silver and coinage. Surat also specialised in building ships. The Mughal naval fleet commanded by the Sidis of Janjira consisted mainly of ships manufactured at Surat.¹ Ovington refers to a ship of above thousand ton built at Surat capable of carrying at least hundred guns.²

To the north of Surat was situated Bhurch (Broach), a flourishing industrial centre and a port-town. The climate of Broach was ideally suited for the cotton textile industry. It specialised in producing the "baftas" (woven cloths), a kind of fine cotton cloth. This quality item had a wide market covering Achin and Bantan (South Asia), Persia and the Red sea, the Guinea coast of Africa and the markets of Europe.³ Pelsaert also refers to the fine baftas of Broach and says "all other sorts of cloth for Mouha, Mozambique and the South (Java etc.) are also woven there".

The entry of the foreign buyers, the English and the Dutch, in the Broach market added substantially to the demand for cloth resulting in a shortage of this commodity in the early part of the seventeenth century. Within a short span of time, however, Broach was able to meet the requirements of increased demand.⁴ When the Broach market was low on supplies, the Baroda market made up the deficiency and the Baroda baftas, broader than those

¹ *The English Factories in India*, 1670-71, p.55.

² J. Ovington, *A Voyage to Surat*, London, 1929, p. 126.

³ William Foster(ed.) *Letters Received by the East India Company from its servants in the East*, Vol. 15, p.54, also see Francisco Pelsaert, *The Ramonstrantie* (tr.) W.H. Moreland and P Gay, as Jahangir's India, p.43.

⁴ *English Factories in India*, 1630-33, p.75.



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of Broach, were preferred in some cases. By 1669 the French had also begun to buy in the Baroda market for transportation to Surat.¹

Broach was also the producer of cotton yarn and its another major industry was the bleaching and dyeing of cotton cloths of various kinds.²

Jambusar, an indigo producing area, was situated at a close distance of 27 miles north-Northeast of Broach. The indigo of Jambusar was cheaper than that of Biana and Sarkhej and quality wise but was rated inferior to those of Biana and Sarkhej. Broach was also well supplied with agricultural produce. It supplied large quantities of wheat, rice and butter to Surat and had become the centre for the making of butter and bread.³ The demand by European ships for bread led to the growth of the bakery industry in Broach.⁴

Ship building industry also flourished in Broach. Mandelslo refers to the large quantity of timber being brought into Broach from the surrounding areas and the building of ships for the coastal trade.⁵

¹ B.G Gokhale, *Surat in the Seventeenth Century*, Bombay, 1978 p 75, William. Foster (ed) *The Voyage of Nicholas Downton to the East Indies*, pp. 138-139.

² Tavernier mentions that the river Narbada at Broach was widely renowned for centuries as possessing a peculiar property for bleaching calicoes which were brought here for this purpose from all parts of the Mughal empire. Tavernier's *Travels in India*, (Tr) V Ball II, Oxford, 1925, p.66.

³ B G. Gokhale, op.cit., pp 73-74.

⁴ Ibid. p.74

⁵ Mondelslo, *Travels In Western India*, (ed) M S. Commassariat, London, 1931, p 14



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Ahmadabad, the capital of Suba Gujarat was a principal market for indigo, textiles, saltpetre, gold and silver and precious stones. Describing the prosperity of the city Mandelslo notes "Ahmadabad was unsurpassed at the time as a commercial emporium. There is not in a manner any nation, nor any merchandise in all Asia, which may not be had at Ahmadabad where particularly there are made abundance of silk and cotton stuff..... They also make there great qualities of gold and silver brocades but they put too much thin lace into them so that in goodness and substance they come not near those of Persia, though some of them amount in the country to eighteen crore the piece."¹ At the time when Mandelslo was there a new kind of cloth was just beginning to be manufactured. It was a mixture of silk and cotton interwoven with flowers of gold, which was very highly esteemed. The other varieties of silks produced at Ahmadabad at this time were satins, velvets of all sorts of colours, taffetas and carpets on grounds of gold, silk or cotton.² Ahmadabad also produced famous transparent muslin known as *ab-i-rawan* or flowing water.³

Among the other articles of commerce, besides silk and cotton cloth, were sugar, cumin, honey, lac, opium, borax, ginger, myrabolans, saltpetre, salommonia. Besides this musk and ambergris thagh not produced in Gujarat but were obtained from

¹ Mandelslo, op cit., p 26

² Ibid, p.26.

³ Tavernier, op.cit., p.59



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other parts. Ahmadabad also excelled in precious stones and metals.

The towns Navsari and Gandevi which were situated in the South of Surat produced the textile of fine quality. The prices of calicos were cheaper by 10% to 20% in this area and hence it was more profitable for the European merchants to buy their needs directly from these places than at Surat. The Navsari baftas had a great market in Achin in Sumatra.¹ Cotton and silk stuffs were also manufactured in Bulsar.

A large number of varieties of textiles manufactured during the period included *baftas*, *seminaes*, *duteas*, *birames*, *seribuffs*, *deriyabonds*, *pintadoes*, *tap seilas*, *nacaneer* and *gigames*.

Baftas (Gujarat calico), made in various varieties, broad and narrow and coarse and fine were exported to Europe and were usually white but the Asian markets preferred them dyed red, blue or black. The semianoes (called after samana in Patiala, Panjab) was a kind of calico broader than the usual calico being 1^{1/2} yards wide. The Dutee was a coarse cotton cloth. Dholqa was the well known centre of *dutee* production. The Birames much on demand on the Asian markets, were made of a coarse and inferior calico and dyed red, blue or black. Burhanpur was the major centre of manufacture of this cloth. Cutlaries, a mixed cotton and wool fabric of satin were used in England for making quilts. The Ahmadabad and Cambay areas manufactured this cloth in great

¹ B.G. Gokhale, op cit. p.81



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quantities. The Pintado was a painted cloth with figures representing sundry trade and occupation. The 'Patola' was a silk cloth. It had a market in the Malay archipelago. The others such as Deriyabonds, *seribults*, *tapseilus* and Nacanees were varieties named after their province. (*Daryabond* in Oudh, *lakhawas* near Patra in Bihar) or their special qualities.¹

Besides textile, spices such as pepper, cloves, cinnamon, cardamom, mace and nutmeg were sent to western and northern India through Surat. Between 1669 and 1686 the English bought 15,260,000 lbs. of black pepper in Surat for export to England. Virji Vohra the merchant of Surat almost controlled the market in spices sending his agents into the Deccan and Malabar to buy up the crops there and also buying large quantities from the English.²

Lac industry also flourished during this period and had a large market in Persia as well as in Europe. The village of Sankheda situated twenty-two miles from Baroda yielded lac in large quantities. It was used as sealing wax and adorning and beautifying household furnitures.³

Tobacco, an item of agricultural commodity, was grown at Broach and in areas to its north and east. Indian tobacco was particularly exported to the West Asian areas and Surat received its tobacco from Broach, Dandipur, Gandevis and Bulsar. The Mughal government collected a large revenue from the sale of

¹ B.G. Gokhale, op.cit. pp. 99-100.

² Ibid, p.106.

³ Mandelslo, op cit., p.16



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tobacco and its use had become so common by the mid seventeenth century that it had spread to all strata of the population and even to the villages.¹

A great change occurred in the nature of Gujarat's over land trade due to the arrival of the Dutch and the English East India companies. They made Surat their head quarter and carried on trade between India and Europe during the first half of the seventeenth century.² The domestic manufacturers were given a fillip by the arrival of the English and the Dutch merchants at Surat. Not only the demand for many of the raw materials rose high but the demand was also great for the manufactured commodities of the province.³

The English were primarily interested in procuring textiles and Indigo from Gujarat. The major centres for textile production in Gujarat as mentioned earlier were Surat, Gandevi, Navsari, Baroach, Baroda, Ahmadabad, Dholqa and Cambay. Textile collected from various regions were sent to Surat which was a

¹ B.G. Gokhale, op.cit., pp. 107-108.

² Surat remained the head quarter of the English East India Company from 1608 to 1687.

³ "Cotton manufactured goods, the Muslims, the calicos, and the other serviceable productions of the then all powerful Indian looms, contributed another important future of the company's important transactions. From the Broach district in Western India was secured in large quantities a highly popular cotton cloth of the day which went by the name of *Bafias*. It had great vogue on England at the period, as indeed had most of the Indian cotton goods. so profitable was the trade as a whole, that special measures were adopted by the company to stimulate the production. At Bombay, in the earliest years a community of cotton weavers was established under Aungier's direction, but bad times coming these artisans fled the island, leaving it to a later generation in a more scientific age to create the cotton manufacturing industry which makes Bombay today the "the Manchester of India". Raw cotton was shipped home as well as the manufactured material. In order that the product might be properly prepared for shipment, screws were sent out, the pioneers of an immense export from England of cotton-pressing apparatus". Arnold Wright, *Annesley of Surat And His Times*. London, 1918, pp. 120-121.



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principal mart for textile. English Factory records furnish some information pertaining to the volume of trade in textiles from Surat.¹ In 1658 the English investment in Ahmadabad at one time amounted to 80,000 to 1,00,000 rupees. Bal Krishna had estimated that the annual average number of various cloths ordered in Surat by the English was 84,500 pieces. Between 1680 and 1683 about 2 million pieces of cotton goods and silk stuffs were collected by the English for the European markets every year. During 1695-96 Surat sent as many as 50,000 pieces of Chintz to England.² As per the Dutch account their company bought about 44,000 pieces of textiles of various kinds. The annual export of cloth pieces at Surat rose from 84,500 pieces in 1658-1664 to 247,000 pieces by 1669-1672. B.G. Gokhale has estimated a figure of 75,000 to 1,00,000 cloth pieces annually sold by Surat merchants to the English and Dutch. After adding the figures for internal trade and export by Gujarati merchants to the Red sea and south-east Asian areas Bal Krishna reaches the

¹ One of the best indications of a region's industrial ties to a particular market area is the degree to which producers adjust, their produce to suit the customers taste. There is ample evidence that the Gujarat weavers had fully adopted their manufacturing techniques and the fabrics to the needs of the Middle Eastern buyers. To take only one example in 1664 the Surat Factory reported that cotton cloth intended for the markets of Persia Basra and Mokha would not sell these unless they were starched and glazed as smooth as paper. The weavers were reluctant to alter the looms to the requirement of the European companies as they were fully employed in 'Weaving sundry sorts of goods for the markets of Mocha, Persia, Bussorah, Atchin etc.' K.N Chaudhari, *The Trading World of Asia and the English East India Company*, New Delhi, 1978, p. 247.

² B.G. Gokhale, op.cit., p.101, Bal Krishna, *Commercial Relations between India and England*, Lonon, 1924, pp. 139-140.



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conclusion that the monetary value of this large transaction must be reckoned in millions of rupees.¹

Another commodity of interest for the Europeans was indigo. Indigo was produced at Jambusar, Sarkhej, Biana, Burhanpur, Gwalior, Lahore and the Deccan. The Biana indigo was made up in balls as it is spoken as "round", whereas the Sarkhej product was prepared in the form of cakes and is spoken of as "flat" and its distinguishing feature was the admixture of sand. The Lahori indigo, because of its comparatively pure quality, fetched high price in Europe, but it cost more to put on the market and the variation in Indian prices was the principal factor in determining the quantity of each brand to be exported in any particular year. Foreign buyers therefore looked in the first instance either to Ahmadabad or to Biana.² A great decline in the quantity of exported indigo however occurred during the second half of the seventeenth century. The English company was discouraging supplies in 1651 and asked only 200 bales in 1653. In 1660 the quantity required was small and the price strictly limited.³ The decline was however not marked by reduction in the European demand but was rather due to the supply of indigo from the areas like Barbados in the West Indies and cultivation of indigo in Java under the Dutch. In 1645 the English company ordered for a reduction of the export from Surat on the ground that the West

¹ B.G. Gokhale, op.cit., PP. 101-102, Bal Krishna, op.cit., p.140.

² Moreland, *From Akbar to Aurangzeb*, New Delhi, 1972, pp. 109-110

³ Ibid, pp. 112-113.



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Indies were producing large quantities of the dye, which, it is important to note, was better made than that which came from India.¹ Thus, by the end of the century the trade in indigo suffered due to the competition of supplies from the areas mentioned above.

Spices constituted another important item of trade. Surat was the principal centre for distribution of spices such as pepper, cloves, cinnamon, cardamom, mace and nutmeg to the western and northern India. While Deccan and Malabar were the two major pepper growing areas in India, spices were also imported from the Indonesian islands by the Gujarati merchants.

The English bought impressive quantities of pepper; 6,000 *maunds* in one consignment, for instance in 1646. Between 1669 and 1686 the English bought 15,260,000 lbs. of black pepper in Surat for export to England.² The Dutch company enjoyed a large share of the spice trade of Indonesia and their records mention the large volumes of spices brought by them to India. In 1671, for instance, Mirza Masum bought 65,612 lbs. of cloves and a year later Manikseth Vora bought some 70,325 lbs.³

¹ Ibid, p. 113.

² Spices played a large part in the company's commercial transactions on the East in the seventeenth century. Pepper cinnamon and cloves were secured mainly from Malaya and the islands of the Archipelago, but Western India contributed occasional shipments, and no effort was spared to increase the cultivation, especially of the former commodity. Surat, however was more a centre for the aromatic spices of less popular use, such as frankincense, spikenard and myrrh. Associated in the company's trade with the aromatics was ivory, which in the guise of "elephant feet" figures very prominently in the seventeenth century shipments from Surat and Bombay. *Annesley of Surat And His Times*, op.cit., p. 122.

³ B.G. Gokhale, op.cit., p. 106.



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Among the minerals purchased by the English in Gujarat, we have references to saltpetre which being an important ingredient of gunpowder was in demand in England. In 1626 the English at Surat took up the export of this commodity, the principal site of supply being Malpur (a town in Sabarkantha district). Upto 1650 the total export of saltpetre by the English and the Dutch was confined to supplies detained in Gujarat and the combined purchases of the two companies ranged between 200 and 300 tons per year.¹

It is significant to note that, Prince Aurangzeb, when he was the Subedar of Gujarat in 1645, forbade the export of this item. The factors attribute the reason for the opposition of the imperial authority to the religious zeal of prince Aurangzeb. A factor writes in 1646, "We find an unexpected impediment in the saltpetre provided raw, to be refined in Ahmadabad.... The prince (very superstitious), possessed by some of his churchmen that it is not lawful for him to suffer us to export flat specie, which peradventure may be employed against Moors, he hath strictly inhibited its delivery into us."²

The prohibition against the export of saltpetre does not seem to have been inspired by the religious zeal, instead it seems that the Mughal authorities were not interested in permitting the export

¹ *English Factories in India, 1646-50, Introduction*

² *English Factories in India, 1646-50, p.34.*



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of such an important item which was used as an ingredient in the munitions of war.

The Surat market also dealt in a variety of metals; coral and ivory, lead and copper. The latter were used for making silver alloys. Surat imported copper from England, China and Japan. The English factors sold large quantities of English copper inspite of heavy imports of Chinese and Japanese copper by the Dutch.¹

Another variety of metal which the English and the Dutch sold to the Indian merchants of Surat and which was in demand was tin. In 1662 the English at Surat estimated that they could easily sell 4000 maunds. In 1663 the estimate rose to 10,000 maunds of Rs. 15 and in 1668 tin was stated to be "for the most current commodity".²

Lead was another commodity procured through English and Dutch companies. There was a steady demand for this metal perhaps due to the increase in warfare and rising demand of ammunition by the Mughal armies battling in the Deccan under Aurangzeb.³ Iron and steel was also exported from Surat to the Red sea markets. Trade was also carried on in precious stones which included Amber beads, the white agate of Cambay, Camelian beads and corals. Corals were sent to Gujarat through the Persian Gulf region, the Red sea area and later from the Mediteranian. In 1619 the Surat merchants protested against the

¹ B.G. Gokhale, Op.cit, p. 108.

² Ibid, p .108.

³ Ibid, p.109.



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English for dealing in Persian corals and in Oct.1619 Surat authorities issued a prohibitory order against the English in this matter.¹

The European companies took up the construction of their own crafts in the harbours on the west coast. The Indian merchants were benefited by the superior kind of vessels build by the Europeans and also by the competition among the Dutch and the English in trade. The efforts of the Dutch to out bid the English helped to maintain freight charges at a low level, and cargo space was generally available in excess of the demand.²

By the middle of the Seventeenth century the English company at Surat had started constructing small vessels as per its requirements. 'This may be regarded as the beginning of the Company's Mercantile Marine'³. The money spent by the Surat factory in the purchase or construction of country craft was recovered by the freight charges received in carrying goods and passengers along the coast or to the Persian Gulf and the Arabian ports.

By the second half of the Seventeenth century the English and the Dutch enjoyed a large share of the India trade, however, the Maratha raids which began from 1664 brought the trade at Surat to a standstill from time to time. A significant phenomenon which emerged in Surat in wake of the Maratha attacks as well as

¹ Ibid, p. 112.

² Ibid, p. 109.

³ M.S. Commissariat, *A History of Gujarat*, Vol. II, p. 309.



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on account of growing incidents of piracies was the practice of selling goods in advance. There are a number of instances which speak of the system of forward contract.

In 1670, the Surat Council made forward contracts for the sale of all the Company's broad cloth, tin and copper expected to arrive on the ships. Khwaja Minaz, on behalf of Virji Vora, took the cloth and Nanchand (grandson of Virji) the tin and copper.¹

To tackle the Maratha problem the imperial authority sent forces about which Gerald Aungier, the President of the Surat Factory wrote, 'Such movements of several armies passing to and fro in the heart of the kingdom naturally hindered the passage of goods to Surat shipment to England.'²

This problem led to a reduction in the sale of imports. In April, 1671 Aungier reported to the company that "most of the coral sent out from England still lay in their hands, as also did the broad cloth, though its entire sale had been contracted for long previously. There was trouble with the vendee Khwaja Minaz over this. The price of cloth had fallen since this contract, and in May we had nearly 2,000 pieces in the company's warehouse unsold, which, says Aungier he sought to 'fling on our hands, but we so roundly dealt with him declaring our intention to seize all his shipping's and estate wherever we could find it, that we at least made him stand to his bargain'. The Council succeeded in

¹ *English Factories in India*, p. 192.

² *Ibid*, p.209.



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making a forward contract with Mirza Muazzam for the broad cloth expected by the ships due in September.¹

Mirza Muazzam was the only merchant who offered to buy company's broad cloth in wholesale but at a price considerably lower than that what he had paid for the previous lot. On December 3 1672, the Surat council resolved to let Mirza Muazzam have the broad cloth and Ivory on his own terms. He, however, then stood off from a bargain, and the cloth remained on the Company's hands.²

In 1674 the *mutasaddi* of Surat Bahadur Khan imposed a prohibition on sending provisions from Surat or Broach on the ground that Shivaji got supplies thereby. Here was a risk sending provisions from Broach to Konkan ports. A vessel belonging to Reynardson and a Parsi merchant sent to Rajpur with Portuguese goods, betel nuts and coconuts, was captured by Shivaji's fleet and President Oxenden's efforts at Rairi to get it restored were met by the plea that this would be contrary to Konkan law and customs.³

Towards the end of March 1674, the English Council decided to open up a factory at Dharangaon in the East Khandesh district. This factory was looted, and burnt by Shivaji's generals on January 1675. Baftas worth Rs. 3,554 perished in the conflagration, while weavers fled with Rs. 5,681 advanced to

¹ Ibid, p. 209.

² Ibid, p. 225.

³ Ibid, p. 245.



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them. The Surat Council decided at this juncture not to increase the 600 corgo (Score) of cloth that the brokers had also promised to send to Surat.¹ The Marathas repeatedly threatened Surat during the last decade of the seventeenth century. The activities of the mercantile community received a set back on account of almost annual incursion of Shivaji. This is also interesting to note that two of the leading merchants of the city of Surat Virji Vora and Haji Zahid Beg were by no means completely ruined by the Maratha raids.² An English letter of November 27, 1664, some ten months after the raid says that "Haji Zahid Beg and Virji Vora, the two greatest merchant of this town, hold up their heads still and are for great bargains; so that it seems that Shivaji hath not carried away all; but left them a competency to carry on their trade".³

It appears probable that these merchants had invested much of their capital in business, which escaped Shivaji and hence they were left with sufficient amount of money to carry on their trade.

Commenting on the severity of the Maratha raids on the city of Surat Ashin Das Gupta remarks, " the plundering of the city by the Maratha twice in the later seventeenth century must have been

¹ *English Factories in India*, pp. 236, 254.

² The English Factory Records give an indication that Virji Vora had so much capital that he could control and regulate the internal market. There are several instances which can be cited to the effect. When he purchased the entire or most of the imported stock of coral,¹ spices,² ivory,³ quick silver⁴ silver⁵ and even tea⁴ bought by the Dutch. The local businessmen were so afraid of him that they did not make any purchase till Virji Vora had disclosed his own mind. *English Factories in India*, 1642-45, p.99, 1646-50, p. 281, 1651-54, p. 57,87, 1646-50 pp.206,257 1651-54, p.30, 1634-36 pp.226,256 1655-60, p. 215. Cf Surmdra Gopal, op.cit, p.176.

³ *English Factories in India*, p. 313.



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crippling blows when they came. But the destruction of private property was not necessarily a public misfortune".¹

The last decade of the seventeenth century and the opening years of the eighteenth century saw the beginning of European piracy in the Indian seas. The English pirates were considered to be most notorious and it was believed that the servants of the English factory had secret dealings with them. An early reference to the capture of a Surat vessel by a European pirate is found in Ovington's Voyage to Surat. In 1691 Abdul Ghufur, a wealthy merchant of Surat, lodged a complaint with the governor of the city to the effect that one of his ships when on its way from Mokha to Surat port had been captured by a 'hatman' (a European) and despoiled a cargo valued at Rs. 9,00,000. The vessel carried passes from the English, Dutch and French companies. As a retaliatory measure the English factors along with the president of the Surat factory named Bartholomen Harris were imprisoned for three months by the Mughal authorities, however, when the custom revenues suffered owing to the stoppage of trade, the Mughal governor recommended to the emperor that the factors should be released. On the arrival of orders from the court Harris and the factors were released in 1691.²

The measures taken in this regard by the imperial authority however, did not improve the situation. In 1695 a large vessel

¹ Ashin Das Gupta, op.cit., p.7.

² J. Ovington, pp. 239-43.



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called the *Ganj-i-Sawai* which belonged to the emperor and was mainly engaged in pilgrim traffic was captured by the sea pirates and its capture enraged the emperor. An imperial order was issued to put a ban on all trade by the European Companies at Surat. Not only this the Sidi of Janjira was instructed to invade Bombay and the English company's servants were to be put in prison until the value of the goods plundered from the ships were compensated.

Relations between the Mughals and the English became cordial when the latter agreed to supply escorts to the Mughal merchants and pilgrim vessels to the Red Sea. The agreement was followed by an imperial order for the reopening of the port to all the three companies.¹

For nearly three years English company suffered financial loss due to the enforced cessation of trade caused by the frequent confinement of the factors.

The retaliatory measures taken by the Mughal authorities, however, could no longer prove effective in this regard. As a result of the European piracy the custom revenue of the Surat port as well as the pilgrim traffic suffered. In the absence of a strong naval force Aurangzeb could not formulate any well defined policy, instead he decided to compel the European companies at Surat to bear the responsibility of suppressing piracy at sea. We do not have adequate data regarding the actual damage caused by the

¹ *Bombay Gazette*, Vol. XXXVI, Pt. I, pp.113-14. Also see M.S. Commassariat A History of Gujarat. Vol. III, p. 452.



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Red sea pirates during this period. However, the existence of a large number of trading vessels, owned by the Surat merchants at the turn of the century suggests that the maritime trade was not seriously affected by the piratical activity.¹

The growing insecurity on the Indian ocean was a problem faced by the Indians as well as the Europeans. The European vessels too were plundered on the high seas. The Surat merchants increased safety measures to avert the dangers on the high seas. They increased Europeans elements in the crew of their ships by paying decent salaries and granting certain privileges to them.²

The accounts of the European travellers who visited Surat in the late 17th century, clearly indicate that the Indian merchants supplied goods to European companies and interlopers traded with Eastern countries, particularly with the Persian Gulf ports and controlled a substantial part of the Indian coastal trade.³ One of the effective ways in which the Surat merchants exercised influence on European companies was through lending large amounts to them. "The English company's debt in Surat was a recurrent phenomenon could be shown by the fact that while in 1669 its debt to the Surat money lenders was RS.60,000, in February 1673 it amounted to RS.80,000. In July 1674 it reached a startling figure of RS.2,57,062. As late as 1697 complaints were

¹ M.J. Mehta, '*Some Aspects of Surat As a Trading Centre in the 17th Century.*' The Indian Historical Review, Vol. I, No.2, Delhi, 1974, p. 260.

² Ibid, p. 260.

³ Ibid, p.260.



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made against the company's inability to repay the loan to its Surat bankers and money lenders."¹

Speaking of the prosperity of the town of Surat, In 1689 J. Ovington remarks : "Surat is reckon'd the most fam'd Emporium of the Indian Empire, where all commodities are vendible, though by never was there seen before. And the river is very commodious for the importation of foreign goods, which are brought up to the city in floys and yachts and country boats, with great convenience and expedition. And, not only from Europe but from China, Asia, Africa, and other remote parts of India. Ships unload abundance of all kinds of goods, for the ornament of the city, as well as enriching at bec Rost."²

TAXATION :

The Mughals had developed a well organized financial administration. To discuss various taxes that were levied other than land, revenue, it will be well to begin with the nature of these taxes first. The categories of various taxes have been very well defined by I.H. Quraishi. He says that 'the jurists of Islam have divided the legal sources of the income of the state into two broad categories. The first of them consists of those dues which a Muslim pays as his religious obligation and which the state collects to expend in an organized and orderly manner; the second

¹ M.J. Mehta, op.cit., p. 260.

² J. Ovington, op.cit. p.131.



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category includes the legitimate taxes which the state is entitled to collect for administrating the affairs of all inhabitants of the area under its control. The former classification applies to *ushr* and *zakat*, the latter includes *Jiziyah*, *Kharaj* and such other taxes as the state can legitimately raise'.¹

The definitions of different terms used in connection of various taxes is available in the *Ain-i-Akbari*. According to Abul Fazl "whatever was assessed on the cultivated land in accordance with the *rai* or crop rates, was known as *mal*. Whatever was collected from various kinds of arts and crafts was termed as *jihat*, and the rest of the taxes came to be known as *Sairjihat*.²

According to the author of the *Khulasat-us-Siyag*, an accountancy manual compiled in the reign of Aurengzeb "The collections made from crops were known as *mal* and a number of taxes which were included under the administration of certain revenue collections in the *jama* were known as *jihat*. Later on *jihat* was included or merged into the *mal* and the complex phrase *mal-o-jihat* was used as a single term. On the other hand the taxes other than *mal* or land revenue such as cloth, skin oil, grains, articles of food and medicines, horses, and camels, collected in the market place and at the *chabutra-kotwali* were known as *sair-i-jihat*.³

¹ I.H. Qureshi, Op.Cit, pp.140-141.

² *Ain-i-Akbari*, I, Op.cit, pp.205.

³ N.A. Siddiqi, 'Nature of the Sair-Jihat taxes', *Essays in Medieval Indian Economic History*, ed. Satish Chandra, p.36.



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In the *Ain*, the *Sair jihat* signified all taxes collected over and above *mal-o-jihat*. By the time of Aurangzeb, *Sair-jihat* or *Sair-uljihat* came to be referred to as a tax of agricultural incidence and was closely related to the amount assessed as *mal-o-jihat*. On the other hand, *sair-ul-wajuh* signified all the taxes which were collected over and above the *mal-o-jihat*.¹ By this definition the tax *Jaziya* imposed by Aurangzeb in 1679 should fall under this category.

Ali Mohammad Khan informs us that motivating the assesses of *Jaziya*, the Hindus were divided into three categories in accordance with their wealth. Those whose property ranged between ten thousand *dirham* or more were considered to be wealthy; those who had two hundred *dirhams* or more were included into the middle class; those who had less than two hundred *dirhams* but had the capacity to maintain themselves and their dependants were considered to be poor. The first category or the wealthy persons were required to pay the *Jaziya* at the rate of forty eight *dirhams* per annum; the middle class was to pay twenty four *dirhams*; and the poor twelve *dirhams*.² *Jaziya* was to be collected annually. *Amins* were appointed in all the subas of the empire to collect this tax.

A *dirham* was equivalent to three *tolas*, one *masha* three *rattis* and $\frac{3}{4}$ of a *masha* in weight of silver. It was laid down that

¹ Ibid, p.38.

² Ali Mohd. Khan, Op cit, p.296.



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1/20th *masha* from a poor man, double of it from a middle class and double of the middle class man from a wealthy person should be collected annually. It was not to be collected in rupees, but if some body paid in rupees, it was to be of the same quantity in weight as mentioned about *dirham*.¹ Imperial servants were exempted from the payment of *Jaziya*. In Suba Gujarat nearly five lakhs of rupees were collected annually through the imposition of *jaziya*.²

In the year 1091/1680 a royal order was issued to the Diwan of the *suba* of Gujarat with respect to collection of *zakat* from the Muslims. This was a tax on the import and export of commodities. Muslim traders paid two and a half percent on the value of the commodity imported; Christian and Jews paid three and a half percent; Hindus were required to pay five percent. In the seventh year of his reign emperor Akbar had abolished this duty on a number of articles which were of daily use. The *farman* embodying these orders lay great emphasis upon the importance of trade and commerce and the need for their protection by rulers. Jahangir also continued this policy and did not levy *zakat*. He mentions that the tax was abolished in all his dominions even in the border provinces of Qandhar and Kabul, even though the *zakat* on the imports and exports was the main source of revenue in these areas.³ It was during the reign of emperor Aurangzeb in the

¹ Ibid, pp.296.

² Ibid, pp.297.

³ I.H. Qureshi, Op.cit, p.146.



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year 1075/1665 that we find the *zakat* levied upon all merchandise of a value higher than the legal *nisab* of fifty two rupees and a half. In the eighth year of his reign (1666-67) Aurangzeb abolished the *zakat* on Muslims, but the Non-Muslims continued to pay the prescribed duty. The *zakat* was however reimposed upon Muslims in the twenty fifth year (1680) of the emperor's reign. Describing the reasons for the reimposition of *zakat* Ali Mohd. Khan says that "His Majesty has now heard that many Muslims mix up their own wealth with that of the unbelievers for the sake of worldly trash for non-payment of *zakat*. They exempt themselves from payment of *zakat* on the ground that it does not belong to them. Great cheating takes place and loss occurs in the *baitul-mal* on which the Muslims have claims. Hence, many Muslims on whom the payment of *zakat* is compulsory evade it. Their responsibility remains. It is therefore most advisable to collect *zakat*. It will be a cause of freedom from responsibility (otherwise)".¹

This time the quantity fixed in *nisab* later on was fifty four rupees and twelve *annas* and a half, which was higher than the previous fixed *nisab*. It is for the first time that the term *zakat* has been used in the *farman* 1680.² In the previous two *farmans* issued in this connection we find the use of the term *mahsul* instead of *zakat*. Regarding this I.H. Qureshi's explanation seems

¹ A copy of the Royal Farman issued to Mohd. Latif in the year 1680, *Mirat-i-Ahmadi*, pp.298-99.

² Ali Mohd. Khan, *Op.cit*, pp. 258-259.



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to be correct. He says that "under Alamgir I, the term *zakat* was given up so far as it concerned the Non-Muslims, because it was felt that *zakat* could not be levied from them as it was purely a Muslim tax and had religious significance. It is often mentioned by the rate of the tax, *chihl du* or two in forty, which being five percent of the value of the commodity was the rate".¹

Mirat-i-Ahmadi furnishes the information that the *zakat-i-ajnas* (market dues) were collected at the time of purchase and the tax collectors issued a certificate to the merchants to be shown, if the commodity was transported out of the city for resale, at custom *chaukis* (*nakas*) and at *chabutara-i-mal* so that a double levy might be avoided,² but, it was discovered that this practice led to the loss of revenue to the government since the price of an article was higher at the time of its sale than at the time of its purchase. Thus, a royal order was issued to the Diwan of the Subah in 1689 for the collection of the merchant dues at the place of purchase when it came to the notice of the state that merchants sold many commodities at places where the taxes were not collected regularly.³ The collection of *mahsul* at the place of sale or purchase had become such a vital question that the state then consulted Qazi Mohammad Akram to find out whether it was permissible under the *shariat* to tax the commodity at the time of purchase. After consultation the earlier regulations were

¹ I.H. Qureshi, Op cit, p. 147.

² Ali Mohd. Khan, Op cit, pp.318, 339, Cf. M.P. Singh, *Town, Market, Mint and Port in the Mughal Empire*, p.120.

³ Ali Mohd. Khan, Op.cit, p. 319.



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reimposed and it was ordered that the tax be collected at the time of purchase.¹

The matter did not end up here as under these circumstances income at the port suffered. The custom of the articles which were to be sent for export was realised only at the ports. The *Mutasaddis* of Combay and Surat brought this to the notice of the emperor that in case the levy was collected at the place of purchase the income of the port might suffer.² Again a royal order was issued with modifications that the collection of tax under old rules should operate in the harbour and state may not suffer a loss. Security was to be taken from merchants and they were to bring with them a receipt for payment of tax on goods permitted to Surat to be shown to officers of the port.³

The Mughal officials levied a number of cesses termed as *abwab* on various classes of revenue - payers. These *abwabs* were in addition to the land revenue or *mal*, sometimes also referred to as *mal-o-jihat*. The *abwab* constituted the head of taxes termed as *Sair-jihat*. A number of these *abwabs* were treated as illegal by the state and in the *farmans* it became a standard instruction to officials to desist from collecting those *abwabs*.

Valuable information regarding the various *abwabs* collected during this period by the state is furnished by the *Mirat-i-Ahmadi*.

¹ Ibid, pp.339-40.

² Ibid, pp.340, 342-343.

³ Ibid, p.343.



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Two *farmans* of Aurangzeb in respect of the abolition of *abwab-i-mamnua* (prohibitory taxes) were issued respectively on 20th November 1665 and 29th April 1673. These orders provide information on various illegal exact ions made by the tax collectors for their own benefit. At the same time these orders lists various *abwabs* or cesses which used to be levied by the state on various commodities and articles. The information contained in these *farmans* pertaining to the sanctioned and forbidden taxes is summarized below.

(a) Cesses which the state was entitled to collect :

- (i) "If a resident of the city [of Ahmadabad] had a tree in the compound of his ancestral house and he wanted to cut it to avoid damage to house etc. the *amils* should not allow him to cut the tree or even its branch till they realize some fee from him."¹
- (ii) "If any one wants to learn the art of embroidery, gold threading, button making, coarse cloth making, needle making, the administrators of the department of art should charge him something under the head 'acquisition of skill' after he has acquired it."²
- (iii) "*Qanungos* and *pyadas* should levy a fee of two and a half rupees per hundred on a person who buys a house in the

¹ Ibid, p. 260.

² Ibid, p.260.



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city, its environs and most of the parganas of the suba of Ahmadabad."¹

(iv) "Oxen for carts and carrying loads when taken out of the city are made to graze bought grass and *jwar* straw, should be charged once one *tanka* as grazing fee."²

(v) "A state monopoly of purchase was now ordered to be discontinued. Formerly the officials used to buy up for the state factory of perfumery all the roses available, and their sale to the public was prohibited, but at the suggestion of Qutubuddin Khan a *farman* was issued allowing gardeners to sell their flowers whenever they liked."³

(vi) "An indigent cotton dresser and an oil processor who wants to ply his trade at another place, should be allowed to do so on his payment of one and a half rupees."

(vii) Slaughter fee taken at the time of slaughtering cows, buffalo. Regarding the abuse of this tax *Mirat* adds "The officials first of all collect the duty on the purchase of oxen, buffalo; then at the time of slaughtering it seems they take an additional Rs.1 1/2 per head of cow or buffalo Hence meat is dear in Gujarat,"⁴ Aurangzeb ordered that "when a cow or buffalo is sold for the *maulud* ceremony or a feast; the duty on the purchase is according to a former order, collected at the

¹ Ibid, p.260.

² Ibid, p. 260.

³ Ibid, p. 262.

⁴ Ibid, p. 261.



kotwal's *chabutra* at the rate of 5 percent from the Hindu and 2 1/2 percent from the Muslim vendors. Do not harass them."¹

(b) Cesses whose collection was forbidden by the state :

- (1) "From every wagon of grass or millet stalk in several places they take one bundle (*pula*) of five sers. And when loads of these are carried on man's head, they take four *badams* from each."²
- (2) "The class of men called *adhawaia* who live by hiring out their carts, buy oxen in Burhanpur or any other place, paying the tax on purchase there and bring them to Ahmadabad, they have to pay that tax again here, and if they do not pay of it, they are declared offenders and fined."³
- (3) "Officers and wealthy persons grow every kind of vegetable and fruit in their own gardens as well as of government ownership. They sell them to vegetable dealers with the increased price ten to twenty times and realize money by force."⁴

¹ Ibid, p. 262.

² Ibid, p. 260. *Badam* or almond was used in Gujarat as a sort of counter like *courie* in North India; 100 *badams* made one *anna*, Cf. J.N. Sarkar, *Mughal Administration*, pp.100-101.

³ Ibid, p. 261.

⁴ Ibid, p. 261.



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- (4) "*Faujdar*s and *Karoris* from the time of Ghairat Khan perforce take ten to fifty rupees as *Khichri* fee from men of the parganas situated on the shore of Sabarmati and Vatrak."¹
- (5) "Gate keepers (*santaris*) of the gates of Ahmadabad city and its localities (*purjat*) prevent carts, ox-load and head-load of persons from ingress and egress. They do not allow them unless they are paid something."²
- (6) "In the village of Dholqa when a poor man wishes to pull his house down and sell the materials, the *kotwal* takes three *tankas* for every thousand bricks that are sold for one rupee."³
- (7) "Where a poor man or a *riaya* brings any kind of animal to Ahmadabad or its *puras* for sale, exact ions are made from them twice - first as entry duty (*amdani*) and secondly at the time of sale. If they are not able to sell it but wish to return with it, the officials exact an exit duty (*raftani*)."⁴
- (8) "When carts loaded with grain or other things leave the city, the officials take Rs.2 per cart at the *chabutra* under the name of *chhatti*."⁵

¹ Ibid, p. 261.

² Ibid, p. 262.

³ Ibid, p. 262.

⁴ Ibid, p. 262.

⁵ Ibid, p. 263.



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- (9) "In Patan on every cart of banana or sugarcane they charge four or five rupees and also take 4 percent of the mangoes, bananas, or sugarcane"¹
- (10) "In the city of Patan the officials by force exact four *muradi tankas* every year per head of sheep, eight *anas* per cow and one rupee per buffalo, even though they may not be grazing at large and their price is below the *nisab*."²
- (11) "Muslims of Prantij, Modasa Harsol, Vadnagar, Visalnagar own mango trees. *Mutasaddis* of the place estimate the produce in multiples of ten as load of trees, and fix the amount. Or they fix it per every two trees and for the remainder, they are again in torture. If those trees at times yield less fruits, they charge revenue as before."³
- (12) "An order was issued to the *Diwan* of the *suba* that the *Firangis* and the Dutch should not be molested for taxation in Ahmadabad. Taxes from them should be collected at Surat Port."⁴

In addition to the various illegal exact ions, the tax collectors also used to indulge into private trade at the expense of the state . *Mirat* speaks of the malpractice's of these officials as well as their nexus with the leading merchants of the city.

Referring to such instances Ali Mohd. Khan inform us.

¹ Ibid, P. 263.

² Ibid, p. 263.

³ Ibid, p. 262-263.

⁴ Ibid, A copy of Royal Farman issued in respect of Prohibited Taxes, Ibid, pp.260-265. Cf. J.N. Sarkar, Op cit, pp. 93-105.



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- (i) "Sheth, Kanungo and Desais in the *chabutra* of every *chakla* in the city show ways and means of levying taxes. They themselves are involved in collecting the taxes."¹
- (ii) "The state officers and nobles (*ahl-i-daulat*) who grow vegetables and fruits in their own gardens and in the gardens of the state and sell the produce to the vendors at ten, to twenty times higher prices and realize money by force."²
- (iii) Mutasaddis, Seths and Desais of many *parganas* of the said *suba* do not allow the public to buy the newly arrived cereals, but buy up the whole of it themselves, and they force the traders to buy rotten or spoilt cereal while force fully charging the prices of fresh grain."³

Another copy of the royal *farman* issued on 29th April 1673 issued to Nizammuddin Ahmad contains a large section dealing with the prohibition of various taxes.⁴

The information is summarized below :

The *jagirdars* of the *mahals* of the *suba* of Gujarat should collect *mahsul* from Hindus in the same manner as it was being collected during the twentieth year of Shahjahan's reign. Muslims were exempted from these taxes.

¹ Ibid, p.260.

² Ibid, p.261.

³ Ibid, p.260.

⁴ Ibid, pp. 286-288.



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Rahdari or road toll which the *jagirdars* used to collect from the merchants and *banjaras* was prohibited.

Prohibition was also imposed on levying taxes on fish, vegetables, grass, hay and fire-wood brought from forests for sale, leaves of *dhakah*, *paliyah* and *babul* bark etc. brought from jungle for sale; whatever was collected on milk, yoghurt, butchery, the skinning of a cow, a goat etc.

Musicians who performed at marriage ceremonies had to pay a certain sum, which was forbidden. A tax called *mallahi*, taken on behalf of the government from traders and travellers in crossing ferries was not to exceed the actual wages of the boatmen as estimated by the government.¹

Perquisites collected on various occasions under the heads of *saliyana*, *faslana*, *mahana*, *jumagi*, *rozinah*, *zamistani* and *Idi*, *dastarshumari*, *Sarshumari* and *Khanashumari* (Muslims were exempted from paying *Khums Shumari*, but it was applicable to Hindus).

Other taxes forbidden includes grazing tax or *kah-charai* collected from *banjaras* and other persons, ground rent for stalls in bazaars (*tah-bazari*), tax on printing of cloth and on brewers (*kallal*) of wine, but tax on every iron cauldron in which molasses was brewed was to be levied as per the regulations. Also

¹ Ibid, pp.286. *Saliyana* was a tax collected annually, *faslana* devoted collection made at each harvest, *mahana* meant monthly collection, *jumagi* was a tax collected once in a week i.e. on Friday, *Zamistani* was a collection made at particular season i.e. winter, *idi* denoted a collection made on the festive occasion, *dastar shumari* was a tax levied on each house hold, *Sar shumari* meant collection taken under the head of general census. *Khums shumari* denoted tax levied as charges for *khums* assessment.



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abolished were taxes on 'weighing stones of stones' and iron, levied at the time of their embossing or stamping; charges collected in connection with the transaction of land and houses (*haveli*); tax collected from cooks and oil pressers; tax on bullock carts and camel litters.

The last mentioned tax was a source of harassment Mirat mentions that the Palanquin (*dolis*), bullock carts and cattle litters ridden by women and children used to be searched and bags, boxes and bundles opened for taking the tax on tobacco".¹

Tax collected by chaudharis and other officials from cotton dressers and shugar pressers when they came to a new place to start business, *peshkash* taken by newly appointed amil from corn dealers and corn carriers; fine or fees paid by a litigant such as *jurmana*, *shukrana*, and cesses taken on marriage, birth of a child etc. all these were prohibited. One fourth of the tax taken on the recovery of the stolen property from the rightful claimant was also ordered to be abolished through the *farman*.

Prohibitory orders were also issued against the tax levied on the weighing balances known as *dharan* and *dandidari* at some places, commission of the headman (*dastur-i-mehtara*) in the vegetable market and cess on mutton taken at the *chabutra* of *kotwali* were also abolished.

¹ Ibid, p. 94. The excise duty on tobacco was abolished in 1666 in consequence of a soldier killing his wife when her cart was searched by the tax collector for concealed tobacco. Aurangzeb's *farman* of 1673 definitely instructs his officers "do not trouble the people by searching their *dolis* bullock carts and other things."



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Orders were also issued to messengers posted at the *dak chowki* not to harass the travellers by taking money from them.

In 1682 Aurangzeb issued another *farman* abolishing the following *abwabs* : *malba*, *bhent*, *baladasti*, *tahsildari* and *sadir-o-warid*.¹

Khafi Khan states that Aurangzeb remitted nearly eighty taxes each of which used to bring many crores to the government treasury from the entire territory of Hindustan.² The fact of the matter is that most of these taxes were being pocketed by administrative officials and they were not remitted to the imperial treasury during the period of Aurangzeb. The abolition of these taxes in a way was an admission of the ineffectiveness of the Mughal administration to collect these taxes. These taxes, though forbidden continued to be collected by various officials. Khafi Khan states, "But the real fact is this, the *rayyat*-protecting Aurangzeb orders the above mentioned taxes to be remitted and insistent orders were sent about the matter, nevertheless, apart from *pandari* tax most of which were realised either in the territory of the capital or at the centre of the famous provincial government the order about other taxes were never obeyed. For the following two reasons, the *faujdars* and *jagirdars* of distant regions did not refrain from levying the other taxes inspite of the prohibition of the emperor. First, no fear or dread of punishment whatsoever was

¹ Ibid, p. 304; also of Cf. J.N. Sarkar, Op. cit, pp. 104-105.

² Khafi Khan, *Aurangzeb In Muntakhab-ul-Lubab*, Trs, Anecs Jahan Sayed, Bombay, 1977. pp.141-142.



left in the hearts of the *jagirdars*, *faujdars* and *zamindars* during the reign of Aurangzeb throughout the protected empire of Hindustan. Secondly, either owing to negligence and lack of attention or in order to be on the safer side the *diwani* officers did not remove these taxes from the *diwani* records as they ought to have done. Consequently at the time of assigning salaries to the officers who demanded them these taxes were not removed and deleted from the *jagir* orders."¹

Muntakhab-ul-Lubab furnishes further information regarding the negligence of the administrative authorities, the abuse of the *abwab* and *plight* of the traders. We are informed that "*rahdari* or road toll continued to be realized in most territories of Hindustan. Due to the illegal exaction of this duty situation had reached to such an extent that (*mazaif*), the cost of a commodity or article purchased at a factory (*arnak*) or port had to be spent in carrying it to its destination. The oppression of the *rahdars* and the *zamindars* deprived thousands of travellers and respectable way farers of their lives and self-respect along with their property."²

For the administrative purposes to collect the taxes like *Sair-ul-wajuh* the markets of big cities or ports were formed into several separate *mahals* known as *Mahalat-i-Sair* or *mahalat-i-sair-i- balda* .³ *Mahal* was a purely fiscal unit, which

¹ Ibid, pp.141-142.

² Ibid, pp.142.

³ M.P. Singh, Op.cit, pp.115-118.



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functioned to facilitate the work of revenue collection under different heads and at several places in the city. Like the land revenue collectors the collectors of the market dues were also known as *amin*, *karori*, *aunuhgo*, *chaudhari* and *mutasaddi*.

Mahal-i-Sair was assigned in *jagir* as well as was reserved for *Khalsa*. The *Sair* at Ahmadabad comprised a number of *mahals* known as *mahalmendi*, *chabutrara-i- tambaku*, *nakas*, *jauhari bazar-o-manhari*, *chabutra-i-kotwali*, *darul zarb dariba pan*, *mahal kiraya dakakin* (rented shops). At Surat the *mahal-i-Sair* included *mahal furza*, *mahal khushki*, *mahali-i-darul-zarb*, *mahal-i-ghallamandi*, *mahal-i-jahazat*, *mahal namak sar*, *mahal - Chabutra - i - kotwali* and *mahal dallali jauhari-o-manhari*. In small towns the entire *mahsul-i-mahal Sair* was collected at the *chabutra-i-kotwali*.

Information regarding different sorts of *Sair mahals* is available in the Supplement to *Mirat*. The *mahal* where the duties on all kinds of cloth like - cotton, silk, wool and raw cotton, hemp, flak, leather were levied was known as *Katraparcha*.¹ This *mahal* was also called "*sad panj*" or five percent.² Before the period of Aurangzeb a small duty on items of import and export under the name of *Shukr-i-dallali* was levied in the suburbs and *mandis*. However, in the reign of Aurangzeb the different rates

¹ *Mirati-i-Ahmadi*, Supplement, p. 181.

² *Ibid*, p.179.



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(Muslims 2 1/2%, Christians 3 1/2% and Hindus 5%) of taxes prescribed for different communities were collected here.¹

A separate division of the cloth market was the *kotha* of wahabgunj situated near Nainpur. Because of the sufficient space in the cloth market, drugs imported from Surat were kept here. The agents of the *mutasaddis* were posted here, who issued passes under the seal of the *mutasaddi* after duly entering the dues payable on the various articles. Yarn and hides were also taxed in the same way.²

Around Ahmadabad a number of *nakas* or check-posts were attached to the *Katraparcha*. The *mutasaddi* used to appoint officers in these *nakas*, whose duty was to collect the dues, issue passes to merchants and then allow the merchandise to pass.³ The place where commodities and corn etc. was brought from outside and sold was known as *Mandvi*. At Ahmadabad as many as 19 *mandis* situated in and around the city belonged to this *mahal*. Market dues collected here were same as levied at *Katraparcha*.⁴

The cattle market also formed a part of *mahal-i-sair*. The duties collected here were same as prescribed earlier - 2½ % for Muslims, 5% for Hindus, 3½ % for Christians and 4% for Harbis (those belonging to hostile countries).⁵

¹ Ibid, p.179.

² Ibid, pp. 180-181.

³ Ibid, p. 181.

⁴ Ibid. pp. 181-182

⁵ Ibid, p. 182. Also see M.P. Singh, Op.cit, p 123.



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Jewel market was known as *Jauhari-bazar-o-Manhari*. This market dealt with the precious metals like gold and silver, jewels, iron and articles of wood.¹ The tax of 1¼ percent was charged on account of brokerage on jewels.²

Mints in the Mughal Empire brought a considerable amount of income to the state. Large sums of money were realized through the charges known as *Mahsul-i-darul-zarb*. The department where the coins were minted was known as *Darul zarb*.³

The dues on betel leaves and tobacco were collected at *mahal-i-pandariba*, but for supervision it was grouped with *mahal-chabutra-i-kotwali*. The tax or rent received from certain shops was spent on the poor through stipends distributed by the principal authorities.

In big cities the *chabutra-i-kotwali* constituted a separate *mahal* and the taxes collected here together with that of a number of *mahals* formed part of the entire *jamandami* of the city. At Ahmadabad the income from the betel leaf market was attached to the kotwali.⁴

An important official of the market was *Moqayyim*. He used to fix the prices in the market on the basis of purchase price of the commodity. he was paid 12 annas per hundred rupees of the commodity price.⁵

¹ *Ibid*, p. 183.

² *Ibid*, p. 183.

³ *Ibid*, p. 183.

⁴ *Ibid*, P. 183. Cf. M.P. Singh, *Op cit*, p. 59.

⁵ *Ibid*, p. 180



CHAPTER - 4

AURANGZEB AND RELIGION

Much has been said and written about Aurangzeb's religious fanaticism and Puritan views. An attempt has been made in this chapter to understand the practice and policy followed by Aurangzeb in Suba Gujarat with regard to religion.

Divergent views have been expressed by different scholars, on Aurangzeb's attitude and inclination towards religion.¹ Without going into the details of the argument provided by the scholars on this issue, it would be more proper to analyse Aurangzeb's attitude towards religion from the beginning of his childhood.

Though, we do not have much information as to how Aurangzeb was educated but the contemporary historians do speak of the teachers of Aurangzeb. The *Badshahnama* mentions only the name of Mir Hashim Gilani as the tutor of Aurangzeb.²

Maulavi Abdul Latif Sultanpuri seems to be the first teacher of

¹ Aurangzeb had come to the throne after imprisoning the reigning king Shahjahan, his father and killing of his eldest and the youngest brother. He had to justify his seizure of the throne. Thus from 1660 to 1666 hectic military campaigning was undertaken by Aurangzeb but he failed. When in 1666 Shahjahan died Aurangzeb felt assured of his authority and a new post facto justification had to be found for his coup 1658-59 and in keeping with his orthodox temperament justification was provided by an emphasis on the Islamic character of the empire and a new religious policy was inaugurated to create religious halo around the imperial crown. M. Athar Ali, *The Mughal No Bility under Aurangzeb*, New Delhi, 1997, pp. 101. Jadunath Sarkar speaks of "A Hindu Reaction" against orthodox Islamic Policies of Aurangzeb. Cf. *History of Aurangzeb Vol. I-IV and the Mughal Administration*. Z. Faruqi offers justification for various anti Hindu and pro Islamic measures of Aurangzeb. Refer *Aurangzeb And His times*, Delhi, 1972. Shibli Noman in his *Aurangzeb Alamgir Per Ek Nazar*, (Urdu), offers explanation for Aurangzeb's anti Hindu measures more or less on the lines of Z. Faruqi.

² Z. Faruqi, *Op. cit*, p. 543.



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Aurangzeb.¹ Mulla Mohan or Muhiyuddin, Wazir Sadaullah Khan, Sayyid Mohammad of Kanuj, Mulla Shaikh Ahmad or popularly called Mulla Jiwan appears to be the other teachers of the emperor.²

Khafi khan says that Aitamad khan was one of Aurangzeb's teachers but does not give any detail.³ While making a mention of the course of teaching that Aurangzeb undertook. Z. Faruki remarks that "apart from the Holy Book, Aurangzeb had made a careful study of the sayings of the prophet, Muslim jurisprudence and scholastic literature. He was very fond of the works of Imam Ghazali and books and pamphlets written by saints and *sufis* were his favourite studies.⁴ *Alamgirnama* also tells us that inspite of the terrible preoccupation of the war of succession, Aurangzeb had learnt the Quran by heart and that, he was studying the *Kimya-i-Sadat* and the *Ihya-i-Ahwal-i-Uulum* of Imam Ghazali. At the same time he made a copy of the Quran.⁵

Thus, it appears that Aurangzeb had an earnest inclination towards Islamic theology. Though, not much is known about the scholastic pursuits of Shuja and Murad, but much information is available with regard to the philosophical works produced by Dara who was an accomplished. Scholar of Persian and Sanskrit Dara as a prince was known for his liberal religious views, however,

¹ Ibid, p. 543.

² Ibid, p. 543.

³ Ishwardas Nagar, *Futuh-at-i-Alamgiri*, tr. Tasneem Ahmad, Delhi, 1978. pp. 117-118.

⁴ Z. Faruki, op.cit, p. 543

⁵ Anees Jahan Sayed, op.cit., p. 543.



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the same views cannot be attributed to Aurangzeb, who had an orthodox bent of mind. Commenting upon Aurangzeb's personality S.A.A. Rizvi says that "Aurangzeb was a ruler of Puritan and orthodox views with profound leanings towards Sunni dogmas and in this he, no doubt stood very near to the ideal conceived by Mujaddid (Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindi)"¹ Though ideologically, Aurangzeb may be compared to Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindi, but he was in no way influenced by the *sufis* of the Naqashbandi order. Members of the Naqashbandi order seem to have been patronized by the state since the days of Babur and the descendants of the Mujaddid do figure during the reign of Aurangzeb.² The observation made by S.A.A. Rizvi that Aurangzeb thought and decided for himself and the Mujaddid had no influence over him appears to be correct.³

Aurangzeb's narrow approach and orthodox bent of mind is clearly reflected through various measures which he carried out as a ruler. The reforms which Aurangzeb sought to bring about in the society remained confined to a particular section. Stipends were given to the *Muazzins*, *Imams*, *Khatibs* and to the officials of the *Hisba* department, which was interested in finding out fresh avenues of employment and promotion for its development.⁴

Sayeds, Shaikhs and *Ulema* also received great patronage. The

¹ S.A.A. Rizvi, *Muslim Revivalist Movements in Northern India*, Agra, 1965, p 413.

² Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindi's grandson, Masum lived at the court of Aurangzeb and received financial support from him.

³ See Mohammad Habib's introduction to *Muslim Revivalist Movements in Northern India*, p.XII.

⁴ S.A.A. Rizvi, *op.cit.*, p. 412.



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Ihtisab department provided employment to a large number of *ulema* from whom *Qazi*, *Muftis* and *Muhtasibs* were drawn.¹

Though it becomes evident from the contemporary sources that Aurangzeb was inclined towards Muslim orthodoxy, by temperament, yet as a ruler he had to function within the parameters of the Mughal state as laid down by Akbar. Thus, we find contradiction in his policies and actions. It is to be pointed out in this connection that Aurangzeb's orthodox religious attitude was first displayed in Gujarat when he was its *subedar*. He ordered the great Jain temple of Chintanrani built at Ahmadabad by Shantidas Jauhari, to be desecrated and converted into a mosque. The mosque was named as Quwat-ul-Islam.²

Shantidas was however favoured, when Aurangzeb assumed the reins of power. After his coronation, the emperor confirmed the grant of the Pargana of Palitana (which included the temple of Shatrunjaya) on Shantidas Jauhari.³ Thus, Aurangzeb appears to have continued the policy of appeasement towards the rich merchant community as initiated by his predecessors. It is also quite apparent from the above evidence that Aurangzeb moulded

¹ Ibid. p. 426.

² Ali Mohd. Khan, op.cit, p. 220.

³ The text of the *farman* runs like this "Shantidas Jauhari had represented to the holy auspicious and exalted presence that according to the *farman* of his late Majesty, the shelter of Khilafat, the shadow of God, possessing the dignity of soloman, which was dated the 19th of the holy month of Ramazan in the 31st year of the Sarkar of Sorat, a dependency of the Subah of Ahmadabad, had been given this servant as *inam* by way of *altamgha* for two lakhs of *dams*. He now desired an illustrious royal mandate to be issued from the court of the Sultanate. Aurangzeb therefore, again grants to Shantidas the said paragana as *inam* to remain with his lineal descendants from generation to generation and the usual instructions are given to the officials and *mutasaddis* of the Suba" M.S. Commissariat, *Studies In The History Of Gujarat*, p.68.

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religion as per his own convenience or advantage. Similarly in order to overcome the opposition from the Chief Qazi of the empire to recite the *Khutba* in his favour, during his second coronation, Aurangzeb induced Qazi Abdul Wahab Pattani, the Chief Qazi of Gujarat to mould the Islamic *Shariat* in his favour. The reigning king Shahjahan was alive but was declared as infirm and unfit to rule on health grounds. *Mirat-i-Ahmadi* informs in this connection that "Abdul Wahab represented to his Majesty that if he is beneficently instructed, he will convince the chief Qazi to recite the holy *Khutba* in the name of his majesty. He was ordered that it would be an occasion for payment of homage. The Shaikh declared after refutation of theological problems, rational arguments and narrative proofs that His Majesty (Shahjahan) has become weak; He has lost consciousness. He has lost control over administrative machinery of the empire such as organization of affairs, welfare and comforts of people.... Recitation of the *Khutba*, under these circumstances in the name of the son who is worthy of sultanate and *Khilafat* as permissible and allowable in the holy religion. He quoted many reliable traditions in this respect before the chief Qazi, other *ulema* and scholars. He convinced all of them. Shaikh Abdul Wahab was ordered by the court of *Khilafat* and world government to recite the *Khutba* in the



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auspicious name of his Majesty. He was elevated to the rank of *Qazi-ul-Quzzat*'.¹

Thus, Aurangzeb used religion to his personal advantage by moulding *Shariat* to suit his interests.

Prince Dara was also killed on the ground of infidelity and deviation from Islamic faith.² It appears that once Aurangzeb projected himself as the defender of true faith, he had to live up to that image.

Immediately after his coronation. Aurangzeb issued religious regulations to all the *subas* of the empire. As per these regulations *muhtasibs* were appointed in the various *subas* and Mulla. Iwaz-wajih was appointed as the chief *muhtasib*.

These officials were responsible for ensuring that the things forbidden in *shara* were not to be practised by the citizens. Thus, state assumed the responsibility of regulating the moral conduct of the citizens. A royal *farman* was issued in this connection to the officials of Ahmadabad prohibiting people from consuming wine and other intoxicants.³

Aurangzeb seems to have earned good reputation among the orthodox elements through his measures. The author of *Maasir-i-Alamgiri* giving details of the religious regulations says "Thank God even now, owing to the piety of the emperor, the whole Hindustan is free from the filth of innovation and heresy.

¹ Ali Mohd. Khan, op.cit,p.248.

² Khafi Khan, Op.cit, p. 140.

³ Ali Mohd. Khan, op.cit, p. 251.



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Through the auspices of this hearty endeavour the *Hanafi* creed had gained much strength and currency in the great country of Hindustan as was never seen in the times of any of the preceding sovereigns".¹

Another measure of Aurangzeb which alienated a large section of the masses was the reimposition of *Jaziya* in 1679 A.D. Though, this act of the emperor has been analysed by various scholars, but it is difficult to ascertain the real motive behind the reimposition of *jaziya*. The Persian chroniclers Isardas and Ali Mohammad Khan emphasise the role of the ulema with regard to the imposition of *jaziya*. Ali Mohammad Khan says 'Since His majesty was inclined to promote the faith and to give currency to the laws of the *shara*, rejecting all things contrary to *sharia* in the fixing of expenses and in all matters of state as well as in all revenue and administrative matters, at this auspicious movement, the learned men, the theologians, and the saintly persons, in view of his regard for the faith, represented to the emperor.

Emperor, that the levying of *Jaziya* upon the opponents of the (true) faith was compulsory according to *Sharia* and urged him to reimpose it in the province of the Empire.²

Ishwar Das Nagar writes in this regard that "The *ulema*, scholars and the *faqih*s on noticing the religious attitude of the emperor, represented to him the necessity of levying the *jiziya* on

¹ *Maasir-i-Alamgiri*, Tr. Jadunath Sarkar, Calcutta, pp. 14, 314.

² *Ibid*, P.296.



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the *zimmis*, as it is essential according to the honoured *shariat*. His Majesty considering it as one of his necessary duties, appointed Inaytullah Khan to accomplish this work (Collection of the Jiziza)".¹

The accounts of the contemporary historians reveal that the conservative elements at the court enjoyed the patronage of the emperor and they gained in strength when they found Aurangzeb as the upholder of puritan views. A significant point regarding *Jaziya* is the year of its implementation. Probing the motives of Aurangzeb behind, this act of religious bigotry Satish Chandra argues 'why it should have taken Aurangzeb who was himself well versed in the *sharia* twenty two years from his accession to the throne to arrive at the orthodox position regarding *Jaziya*'.²

The implementation of *Jaziya* came at a time when the Mughal empire was passing through economic constraints due to constant warfare in the Deccan and frontier wars in the north-east.³

Satish Chandra attributes two factors behind the imposition of *jaziya* one is the economic consideration and the other is linked up with the political crisis which the Mughal empire was facing at this time.⁴ Considering the views put forward by Z. Faruqi on this aspect the motive being the levying of *jaziya* becomes more clear. He says "Aurangzeb had relieved the people from many liabilities

¹ See Anees Jahan Sayed, *Aurangzeb In Muntakhab-ul-Lubab*, p.275.

² Satish Chandra, 'Jizya and the State in India during the 17th century', P. 323-324.

³ Ibid, p. 324.

⁴ Ibid, pp. 328-329, 332-333.



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but he had soon to reconsider his decision. At the time when the treasury had lost a considerable amount of money, the imposition of the *Jiziyah* was suggested to him. The proposal suited him both from the religious and from the financial stand points. According to Aurangzeb, the imposition of the *Jiziyah* was binding on him, while other taxes were not compulsory. By remitting other taxes and levying *jizyah*, he thought he would be able not only to adjust his finances, but discharge a religious obligation as well".¹

Whatever may be the real motive behind the implementation of *Jaziya*, but it was looked upon with horror by the contemporary Hindu masses. What mattered in this connection was not the financial aspect but the manner in which it was collected.²

The other discriminatory measures which Aurangzeb took with regard to Hindu masses did not evoke protest of any sort, however, the implementation of *Jaziya* was received with great protest by the general public. A vivid description of the protest movement has been given by Khafi Khan. He says that "After this news had spread, all the Hindus of the capital and the neighbourhood, numbering many lakhs, came by the riverside under the Jharoka, and appealed for exemption from the tax for the reason of their financial helplessness to pay it. The emperor paid no attention to their appeals. Ultimately, one day when emperor was proceeding to his Friday. Prayer, a great multitude

¹ Z. Faruki, op. cit. p. 151.

² See *Mirat-i-Ahmadi*, Vol. I, *Farman* Produced in connection with the implementation of *Jaziya* p. 296.



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of Hindus collected together from the gate of the Fort to the Juma Mosque, and barred his way in order to appeal to him. The crowd was so great that it became impossible for people to move; bankers and cloth merchants, in fact all shop-keepers of the army-camp and all artisans of the city, put their works aside and assembled on the emperor's route. In spite of disciplinary orders, (baton charge) owing to which the heads, and feet of many people were wounded, the emperor after mounting his elephant could not reach the mosque, while every moment the crowd of these wicked people kept on increasing. The emperor halted for a moment; then he ordered his large elephants and his cavalcade to be driven over the crowd and many men were trampled and killed under the feet of the elephants and horses. In this manner for a few days the Hindus assembled together and made their appeals; ultimately they submitted to the paying of the *Jizya*".¹

How firm was Aurangzeb in imposing the *Jaziya* is evident from the above mentioned incidence and the ordinance which was issued in connection with the *jaziya* on April 20th, 1679. The text of the *farman* has been produced in *Mirat-i-Ahmadi*.

- I. Clause first of the *farman* says that "the *jaziya* should be levied upon the *zimmis* who are people of the book, Zoroastrians and idol worshippers of Ajam; it is not to be levied upon the idol worshippers who are at war, apostates, minors, women, slaves, persons whose hands and feet have

¹ Khafi khan, op. cit., pp. 275-276.



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been cut off, blind men, lunatics, persons mentally affected and poor men who have no profession (income).

II. Twelve *dirhams* from the poor (*faqir*), twenty four *dirhams* from the middle class man and forty-eight *dirhams* from the rich man should be realized annually as the *jaziya* tax. Since at present *dirhams* are not current.... $1/20$ of a *masha* is to be realized from the poor, double of it from the middle class man, and the rich man is to pay the double of what the middle class man pays. The rupee is not to be accepted, and if anyone pays it in rupees, the rupees should be taken after weighing according to the above rates. Later on, when the *dirhams* have been minted, only *dirhams* will be accepted.

III. There is a difference (of opinion) in discriminating between the rich, the middle class man and the poor. so the following interpretation must be followed. A rich man is he who owns (property) worth ten thousand *dirhams* or more; a middle class man is one who has (property) worth two hundred *dirhams* and more. A man who possesses less than two hundred *dirhams* is to be considered a poor man. The *jaziya* tax should be taken from them accordingly. If a poor man has no property, but his earnings are more than the needs of himself and his family, the *jaziya* tax should be levied on him. If his earnings do not

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suffice his needs and the needs of his family, he should be exempted from the *jaziya* tax.

IV. The collector of the *jaziya* tax should take the *jaziya* from the *zimmi* in the following manner. The *zimmi* should come on foot to pay the *jaziya* tax, and should remain standing while the collector is sitting. The collector should place his hand over the hand of the *zimmi* and say. : 'O *zimmi* pay the *jaziya*.' If a *zimmi* sends his deputy to pay the *jaziya* tax, the collector should not accept it, also the collector should not take the *jaziya* merely at an informal meeting.

V. After the assessment, the amount for the whole year must be realized from the rich at once. The middle class man and the poor man be allowed to pay the annual tax in two and four instalments respectively.

VI. The *jaziya* is cancelled if the *zimmi* adopts Islam or dies.

VII. If before the assessment of the *jaziya* in the first year, a *zimmi* minor attains to majority, or a *zimmi* slave becomes free or an infidel at war becomes a *zimmi* or a sick *zimmi* recovers, the *jaziya* tax of that year is to be realized from them according to their financial condition. If however any of these events happen after the assessment, the *jaziya* for the year is not to be realized from them.

VIII. If a man is rich at one time and poor at another time, then if he has been poor for the larger part of the year, he should pay the poor man's *jaziya*. If he has been rich for half the year



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Muslims as a mark of special favour; however, the non-Muslims continued to pay the prescribed duty.

The Muslims could not enjoy this favour for a long time as the state started losing revenues when the Non-Muslim merchants started mixing their goods with that of the Muslims. Aurangzeb soon realized his folly and reimposed *zakat* on Muslims in the year 1680.¹

Thus, it appears that with regard to the Hindu masses Aurangzeb's policy was of general discrimination. This has been reflected through various other orders issued in connection with the demolition of temples, prohibition against certain religious practices followed by the Non-Muslims.

In the year 1665 a royal order was issued to the administrative officials at Ahmadabad that the demolished temples which had been repaired should be pulled down.²

In 1693-94 an order was issued to the *Nazim* of the Suba in connection, with the demolition of a temple at Vadnagar.³

Mirati-Ahmadi refers to a *farman* of the year 1665, wherein it has been stated that "twenty temples were demolished in Ahmadabad and other parganas before the royal accession; they

¹ Ibid, p. 296.

² M.S. Commissariat, Op.cit, p. 68.

³ Ali Mohd. Khan, Op.cit, p. 328.



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are repaired and idol worship continues. Action should be taken on what has been stated in the body of the *farman*.¹

The information provided in the connection reveals that temple demolition was not a new phenomenon, even before the reign of Aurangzeb temples had been desecrated. Orders regarding the temple demolition continued to be issued throughout the reign of Aurangzeb. As late as 1702 we find an order issued in this regard. As per the text of the *farman* it was ordered that "the temple of Somnath situated in Saurath Sarkar in the middle of the sea was pulled down in the beginning of the year of accession and idol worship was discontinued. Now it is not known as to in what condition it is. If God's creatures still engage themselves in worship of idols, the temple should again be pulled down that there may not remain any vestige of the building and they should be expelled from the place."²

In spite of the number of orders issued for the destruction of the Hindu places of worship, we do not find any instance of resistance offered by the Non-Muslims against the repressive policy of state, instead there is a reference of the defensive measure taken by the Hindus of Surat. 'They agreed to pay for the privilege of keeping them safe'.³

No doubt the general order for the demolition of temples was marked by the religious zeal of the emperor, but it had the other

¹ Ibid, p. 353.

² Ibid, p. 328.

³ S.R. Sharma, *The Religious Policy of the Mughal Emperors*, London, 1972, p. 173.



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aspect too and this was the assertion of the imperial power and submission of the vast majority of the population to the wishes of the emperor. As far as the attitude of the masses is concerned they had reconciled to such facts as such orders had been carried out in the past also.¹

In 1114/1703 a royal order was issued to the Diwanis of the empire that the Hindus should not employ Muslims in service,² which again reflects the fanaticism of the emperor.

Some of the other measures taken by Aurangzeb were directed against the social practices and religious festivities, of the Hindus. A royal *farman* was issued in this connection. The *farman* lays down that on the days of the *Pancham*, the *amawas* and the *ekadashi*, the Hindus are in the habit of closing their shops. The officers are therefore, enjoined to arrange that these shops should always be kept open so that the business of buying and selling might continue undisturbed. Another clause of the *farman* mentions that the Hindus of the province, giving currency to false customs, both in the city and in the parganas of Ahmadabad, light lamps on the Diwali night. Moreover on the days of the Holi festival, they open their tongue with foul speech and light the Holi fire in every *chakla* and *bazar*, and throw into flames the stick of any person which they can secure either by trick or by violence. The officers of the province are, therefore

¹ *Mirat* says that twenty temples were demolished in Ahmadabad and other parganas before the accession of Aurangzeb; p. 261.

² Ali Mohd. Kha, op. cit., p. 354.



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instructed to see that the Hindu population did not illuminate the *bazars* on the night of Diwali and to prevent sticks being wrested from people to be thrown into the flames of the Holi, and above all to put a stop to the use of abusive or filthy language during the latter festival.¹ So far as the first regulation is concerned it might be prompted by business considerations.

The objections of the imperial authority with regard to certain customs followed at the festival of Holi and the measures in this directions seems to have taken with a view to prevent violence on such occasions. The order issued for the prohibition of Diwali illuminations was however a discriminatory measure and would have greatly aggrieved the Hindu masses.

Mirat-i-Ahmadi throws some light on Aurangzeb's relations with the different sects of the Muslim community in Gujarat.

It was during his tenure as *subedar* of Gujarat that Aurangzeb came into conflict with the Mahdavi sect. The leader of the Mahdavi creed named Sayed Raju came to Gujarat with his followers during the period of Aurangzeb's *subedari*. *Mirat* informs that when Aurangzeb was appraised of their faith, he ordered the expulsion of the Mahdavis from the city of Ahmadabad. Ali Mohammad Khan says that 'It was necessary in accordance with the religious decree of the *ulama* of the age, to bring them to the path of guidance, repentance and penitence as they were on the path of misguidance, road of ignorance and cause of misleading of the

¹ Ibid. pp. 260, 261, 262.



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common folk.' The Mahdavis might have opposed the imperial action, for we find that a royal force was sent against them and in the skirmish that followed Mahdavis were killed.

This incident brings out the role of the *ulema* pertaining to religious matters. The orthodox attitude of the emperor might have strengthened their hands and they succeeded in issuing a religious decree against Sayed Raju and his followers.

In the year 1685 an uprising of a religious nature broke out at Broach. The revolt was raised by Momnas and Matias who were the descendants of Hindus of the *Ieva* and *Kanbi* castes, an agricultural community. They were originally converted to Islam in the 15th century by Sayed Imamshah a religious recluse, who came from Persia and settled down near the village Girmtha. (called Pirana) some nine miles from Ahmadabad.

Providing the details of the Matiya revolt *Mirat* says [In the year 1685], Sayed Shahji, the grand son of Imam shah succeeded to the spiritual leadership of this sect. Large number of followers thronged to him to make offerings. Sayed Shahji sometimes used to stretch out his feet from behind a screen or curtain. Such was however, the blind faith of his followers that they were content with kissing the saint's feet and heaping near it their offerings of gold and silver. The author says 'In the days of Aurangzeb much attention was laid on Muslim law and to the rooting out of dissent' and most of the royal servants in their zeal to become popular with the Emperor adopted very orthodox views. The malice of there



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officials led them to accuse the Matiyas and their head with being *Shias* and an attempt was made to chastise them. Several of the Saint's disciples were put into prison, and facts about Shahji and irreligious deeds of his disciples were reported to the emperor.

Aurangzeb on receiving this information, wrote to the Sadr and the Qazi of the province to send Sayed Shahji to the royal presence so that he might enquire about his beliefs and his religion. The saint was living at the time near the tomb of Imam shah at Pirana when the Mughal officials arrived to take him to Ahmadabad. Shahji avoided the royal summon and turned the officials away. The act of Sayed Shahji was reported to the Nazim of the Suba Shujaat khan and a party was despatched by the latter under a *jamadar* to bring the Sayed. The saint finding all resistance useless, agreed to go with them, but while leaving his house he took poison with the result that he died shortly afterwards. Another version is that Shahji reached Ahmadabad safely, and after an interview with the governor, administered poison to himself when came to know that he was to be sent to the royal court.¹

The news of Sayed Shahji's death spread rapidly among his followers, who felt aggrieved and prepared themselves to offer resistance. The Matiyas came from various parts of southern and eastern Gujarat and made a arch towards Ahmadabad and later on took possession of the fort of Broach. When this news reached

¹ Ali Mohammad khan, Op.cit, pp. 320-321.



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the *faujdar* of Baroda, he marched against the insurgents but was unable to drive them out from the fort of Broach. When Aurangzeb was informed of the situation, he sent strict orders to Shujaat khan to expel the rebels and to take possession of the fort of Broach. Shaujaat khan sent an army under Nazar Ali khan and Mubarak khan Babi to effect this purpose.

In the scuffle that ensued between the imperial forces and the Matiyas, large number of followers of Shahji perished. Shujaat khan was complimented by the emperor for his success against Imamshahi followers.¹

Aurengzeb also made an effort to enforce some reforms among the Bohra sect. He ordered that 'in the mosques of the irreligious Bohras the Sunni Imams and Muizzins should continue to be appointed as before and they should recite the prayers daily five times in accordance with the sunni tenets.'² In 1703-4. it was reported to the emperor that two Bohras of the Ismailia sect, named Isa and Taj who were cotton sellers, were obtaining money by spreading heretical doctrines among the people. On receipt of the royal orders, prince Mohammad Azam the then Nazim of Gujarat, put them under custody and subsequently released them on their furnishing a written bond for good behaviour. Later on Shaikh Akramuddin the Sardar of Ahmadabad represented to Aurangzeb that these two Bohras, inspite of their written

¹ Ali Mohammad khan, Op.cit, pp. 322-324. Cf. M.S. Commassariat, Op.cit, pp.145-147.

² Ali Mohd. Khan, Op.cit., p. 263.



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guarantee to the prince, were still misleading the people and if he would receive secret orders from the emperor, they would be arrested and sent to the court. A royal order was executed to the effect and action was immediately taken thereupon.

Shortly after this incidence it was reported to the emperor that Khanji, a successor of Qutub, leader of the Ismail Bohra community, along with missionaries was misleading the people and spreading false doctrine. They arrived at Ahmadabad and collected one lakh and fourteen thousand rupees for the purposes of securing the release of their colleagues who were in captivity. Orders were issued from the royal court to the Diwan of the *suba* for the arrest of Khanji and his men. Aurangzeb sent instructions to the effect that arrangements should be made whereby the illiterates among the adults and the children of Bohras should receive religious instructions as per the Sunni tenets in the city of Ahmadabad and in the paragnas, and the cost of this education was to be borne by this community. The persons so instructed were to be examined every month and a report was to be made to the court.¹

The above mentioned instances make it clear that the intention of the emperor was to put an end to certain irreligious practices prevalent among the Bohras, however Aurangzeb's limitation was that he introduced these reforms, within the framework that he had set for religion. Hence, if the people were

¹ Ibid, pp. 356,358-9.



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to educated through religion much emphasis was laid on following the tenets of Sunni creed.

Prohibitory orders were issued against any such practice which was considered unIslamic. In 1702-3 when prince Azam, the eldest son of Aurangzeb, was the *Nazim* of Gujarat, orders were received in all the *Subas* of the Empire to the effect that the preparing of almanacs was against religious injunctions and that a written undertaking should be taken from all astrologers to discontinue the practice.¹

It seems that Aurangzeb's leaning towards the orthodox forces gave an opportunity to the orthodox elements operating at the local level to pursue the policy of religious intolerance. A clear evidence to this effect have been found in English Factory Records.

A letter dated 26th November 1669, from President of the Surat Factory Aungier and his council to the company, gives some valuable information about the attempt of the Qazi of Surat to forcibly convert several of the Hindu inhabitants. This policy resulted in to an exodus of the leading *Banyas* from Surat. The English factors at Surat were greatly alarmed at the consequences of the exodus on their trading activities. They have given a detailed account of the activities of the Qazi in their letter. "You have been formerly advised what insufferable tyranny the *Bannians* endured in Surat by the force exercised by these lordly

¹ Ibid, p. 352.



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Moors (Muslims) on accept of their religion; the sweetness of which the cozzly (Qazi) and other officers finding by the large income paid by the Bannians to redeem their places of idolatrous worship from being defaced and their persons from their malice-did prosecute their covetous avenges with that frequency and furious zeal that the general body of the Banianas began to groan under their affection and to take up resolves of flying the country. A nephew of your ancient shroff Tulsidas Parrack was among others inveigled and turned moor : which was a great heart breaking to your Bannian servants and some dishonour to your house...¹

Nearly eight thousand Banyas left the town of Surat and went as far as Broach. They made a petition to the emperor also to this effect. To express their anguish the merchants also declared *hartal* at Surat and the business activities came to a stand still. Giving a description of the general condition prevailing at this time in Surat Factory record states. "At present several addresses have been made to the king, each party using all probable means to justify itself to the prejudice of the other, the success where of is not yet determined at court. In the interim people in Surat suffered great want, for the Banians having found themselves under severe penalties not to open any of their shops without order from their Mahager (Mahajan) or General council, there was not any provision to be got, the *tanksall* (i.e. mint) and custom

¹ *English Factories in India*, 1668-69, p. 199.



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house shut no money to be procured, so much as for house expenses, much less for trade, which was wholly at a stand, and so it will continue till their return.¹ It appears that Surat Banyas continued their agitation till the imperial authority issued letters of favour and assurance of their safety.²

Thus, it seems that the trade and prosperity of the valuable port town of Surat were the matters of grave concern to the imperial authority. Aurangzeb was not involved in this particular incidence, however, emperor's increasing inclination towards orthodoxy and manner of introducing puritanism in all spheres would have provided much scope and encouragement to the orthodox elements like *Qazis*, *muhtasibs* and theologians to use religion as a tool to implement their authority.

¹ Ibid. p. 192

² Ibid, p. 205.



CHAPTER - 5

SOCIO - CULTURAL MILIEU

In the evolution of composite culture in Gujarat during the medieval period the Arabs and the Persians played a prominent role. With the rise of 'Islamic empires' in the first and second centuries of Islam and the emergence of 'Islamic world economy', Gujarat became a very significant destination of the Arab merchants and traders. Colonies of the Arab traders emerged in coastal Gujarat. With them came the Persians who traded between Gujarat and the Persian Gulf region. They, along with the Arabs, settled in important port-towns like Khambayat and Bharuch and interacted with the local population over a period of time. the Arabs spoke Arabic and the Persians Farsi and as a result of social inter action, the people of Gujarat acquired these Arabic and Farsi words in their vocabulary. This contact also familiarized the locals with the social and religious features of these communities. These were the initial inputs which laid the basis of the composite culture that came into existence in later centuries in Gujarat.

The conquest of Gujarat by Alauddin Khalji in 1304 brought many soldiers, traders and saints to Gujarat. Amongst them the *sufis* played a vital role in the development of the culture of Gujarat.



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One major contribution of the *Sufis* was in the field of linguistic development. The earliest specimens of *Hindawi* are contained in the *malfuzat* of the *sufi* saints of the 14th and 15th centuries. *Khairul-Majalis*, the *malfuzat* of Hazrat Nizamuddin Auliya contains a number of such specimens. The use of the local dialects by the *Sufis* in their conversations with their devotees brought the *pir* and his deciples near to each other and was one of the major factors behind the popularity of the *Sufis*. The veneration in which the Persian speaking elite kept the *sufis* and their frequent visits to the *sufis khanqahs* where they conversed with the *sufi* mostly in Persian led to a very composite linguistic ethos at these *khanqahs*.

The establishment of the Gujarat sultanate in the 14th century attracted a large number of scholars and *Sufis* to Gujarat. One such *Sufi* saint who migrated from Sind to Gujarat was Syed Burhanuddin popularly called Shah Qutb-i-Alam, the grand son of the famous saint of Uchch, Syed Jalaluddin Husain Bukhari, popularly called Makhdum Jahaniyan Jahangasht. He soon became the patron saint of Sultan Muzaffar Shah, the founder of the Gujarat Sultanate and his descendants. In fact the family of Qutb Alam, which had settled down at Vatva near Ahmadabad, was to become the family of patron saints of the Gujarat Sultans.



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Another prominent Sufi saint of this period was Shaikh Ahmad Khattu. While Qulb-i-Alam belonged to the *Suharwardi* order, Shaikh Ahmad Khattu was from the *Maghribi* order.

The most reputed Sufi saint of the Gujarat sultanate was Shah Alam, the son of Qutb-i-Alam. Shah Alam had received his *sufistic* robe from Shaikh Ahmad Khattu. The descendants of Qulb-i-Alam and Shah Alam, referred to as *Sadat-i-Bukhari* or Bukhari Syeds were very highly venerated not only by the local people but also by the rulers and nobles. Many of the Bukhari Syeds played very important political role both during the Gujarat sultanate and later during the Mughal rule after Gujarat's conquest by Akbar in 1573. The Mughal emperors held the Bukhari Syeds in very high esteem and gave them liberal endowments for maintenance of the tomb and the mosque of Shah Alam. Emperor Aurangzeb continued to bestow honour on them and assigned several villages for the maintenance of Shah Alam's tomb and its custodians, the Syeds of Vatva. In 1687 he paid two thousand rupees to Syed Muhammad, the *sajjada-nashin* of Shah Alam's tomb.¹ Earlier, on the occasion of his second coronation Aurangzeb had given Syed Jafar, the eldest son of Syed Jalal Bukhari, the *Sajjada-Nashin* of Shah Alam's shrine a robe of honour.²

¹ Ali Mohammad Khan, Op. cit, p. 316.

² Ibid, p. 249.



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In Gujarat, the earliest specimens of Gujarī which interspersed with other regional dialects are to be found in the *mal'uzat* of the Sufi saints of the region, as noticed earlier. Many of the utterances of Qutb-i-Alam, who hailed from Uchch in Multan are preserved for us in some of the sources. For example, '*Chishtiyon ne pakai ane Bukhariyon ne khai.*'¹ ("It was cooked by the Chishtis and was eaten by the Bukharis"). Here the word *ane* is a Gujarati usage while the rest of the phrase is in Hindawi. In another instance, Qutb-i-Alam's son Shah Alam was married to the daughter of the Jam of Sindh. The other daughter, who was more beautiful than the one married to Shah Alam was married to Sultan Qutubuddin Shah. Shah Alam was furious that this marriage took place without his knowledge. Qutb-i-Alam consoled his son thus : '*Puttar tusada nasib dohan wich' ai* (Son both sister are in your destiny').² This is in pure Punjabi than Gujarī.

Sultan Qutubuddin is said to be a poet of Gujarī and the discourses of the Refai order are also in the same dialect. Shaikh Bahāuddin Bajan (d.1436) is considered to be one of the most renowned Gujarī poets. Profound effect of Sufi thought can be seen in his compositions.

¹ M.I. Dar, 'Gujarat's Contribution to Gujarī and Urdu', Islamic culture, Jan. 1953, p.20.

² Sikandar Ibn Manjhu, *Mirat-i-Sikandari*, ed S.C. Misra and M.L. Rahman, Baroda, 1961, p. 89.



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*'Yun Baajan baaje re israar chaaje
Mandal mun mein dhamke
Rabaab rang mein jhamke
Sufi un per thamke
yun Baaj an baaje re israar chaaje.'*¹

Qazi Mahmmod Daryai (d. 1534) wrote his diwan in Gujarati. It appears that Gujarati had become the spoken dialect at the court of the Gujarat Sultans. On a complaint of a goldsmith to Sultan Mahmud Shah against the oppression of the *muhtasib*, the Sultan remarked: '*Nichi beri sab ne jheri*' ('A low hanging branch of ber tree is shaken by everyone').

The Gujarati language was however taking shape outside the court context. The fathers of Gujarati language lived and wrote in the 15th century. The language was employed with effect by the Vaishnav Bhakti poets like Bhalan and Narsinh Mehta. In subsequent centuries, Gujarat produced a number of literature which are discussed elsewhere in this chapter.

A mystic of Gujarat Shaikh Muhiyuddin Abu Yusuf Yahya who belonged to be Chisti Silsilah and was a contemporary of Aurangzeb was greatly fond of organizing *sama* sessions which was regularly performed at the, *Chishti* and *Suharwardi khanqahs*. However, the *muhtasib* of Ahmadabad, Mirza Baqar, in accordance with royal orders had banned all such musical performances

¹ Kunwar Chandra Prakash Singh (ed.) *Akshayras*, Baroda, 1963, p. 66.



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throughout Ahmadabad. Shaikh Yahya Chishti however, did not conform to this order and continued with *sama* parties. The *muhtasib* as a last resort decided to bring the singers out of the *khanqah* by force, but Shaikh Yahya also prepared himself to offer resistance. The *muhtasib* was persuaded by one Mir Arab, not to meddle in the affairs of the Shaikh. Shaikh Yahya also complained to Aurangzeb in this connection. The emperor then issued orders to Raja Jaswant Singh, the *nazim* of Suba Gujarat, Nizammudin Ahmad, the Diwan, Mir Bahauddin and Qazi Sharafuddin to make amends with the Shaikh. These four officers were ordered to censure Mirza Baqar for his act.¹ One thousand rupees and four *tolas* of *itr* (perfume) was presented to the Shaikh on behalf of the emperor. Thereafter, no one interfered with the ceremonies of the Shaikh. This speaks for itself the respect that the saint commanded with Aurangzeb.

Around thirteenth century the missionaries of the Ismaili creed had also began to settle in Gujarat who were destined to play an important role in the evolution of a composite culture in the region.

Ismalis were the branch of the *shias* who traced their descent from Imam Jafar al Sadiq's son Ismail (8th century). The Ismaili movement began in the mid 9th century as "... a secret revolutionary organization carrying out intensive missionary

¹ *Mirat-i-Ahmed*, Supplement, pp. 80-81.



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efforts in many regions of the Islamic world."¹ During the 9th century the missionary activities of the Ismailis gain momentum under the leadership of Hamdan Qarmat at Kufa. Later on the Ismaili movement spread to Yamen and from there to Sindh. By the late 9th century the Ismaili missionaries succeeded in converting Sumra tribe of Sindh to their beliefs, Gujarat also did not remain aloof from the missionary activities of the Ismailis as a new Ismaili creed was founded by Yemenite *dais* in the region of Cambay which was well connected with Yamen through commercial intercourse. In the year 1658 an Arab *dai* Abdalla was sent to Gujarat by the Yemenite chief *dai* Lamak bin Malik. The adherents of the new Ismaili creed later on came to be known as Bohras.

Another branch of the Ismailis the Tayyibiya sect established itself in Gujarat during the thirteenth century. By the end of the sixteenth century there was a schism in the sect resulting into the division of the sect into Dawudis and the Sulaimanis.

At the end of the eleventh century another off shoot of the Ismailis got foot hold in Persia and came to be known as Nizari sect. During the first half of the thirteenth century, the Ismailis of the Nizari order appear to have arrived in Gujarat.

¹ *Encyclopedia of Islam*, Vol. IV, p. 198.



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Propagation of the religious doctrine which the Ismalis called *satpanth* or true path was popularized in Gujarat by Imam Shah. Imam Shah is also known as the founder of the Pirana sect. The Pirana sect which had its followers both among the Hindus and Muslims has got its name from the village of Pirana situated ten miles south east of Ahmadabad. Imam Shah came in Gujarat during the reign of Sultan Mahmud Begda and settled at Girmatha (Pirana). He succeeded in converting to Islam a very large following from the *leva* and *kadva* Kanbis and the other sections of the local Hindu agricultural population. The descendents of there converts are generally known as Momnas and Matia Kanbis.¹ It has been suggested that "those who were actually converted came to be known as Momnas (from Momin - believers), while those actually not converted but following a half Hindu, half Musلمان faith came to be known as Matia (from Sanskrit word *mata*-opinion)".² A significant feature of the Imam Shahi sect is their religious doctrine. "Their religious content is a mixture of Islamic and Hindu especially Tantric elements. While Idol worship is condemned, Hindu mythology is accepted. Ali is described as the Tenth Avatar or incarnation of the diety, and the Imams are identical with him. The Quran is considered the last of the vedas, which are viewed as holy scriptures whose true interpretation is known to the *pirs*. The religious role of the *pir* or guru is extolled.

¹ M.S. Commissariat, A History of Gujarat, Vol. I, Bombay, 1938, pp.134-135.

² Dayaram, a poet of the eighteenth century Gujarat describes the hybrid religious state of Momnas in these words : *Jhule adhavacha Mumna nahi Hindu nahi Turk* [Prabodha Bavani], M.R. Majumdar, Cultural History of Gujarat, Bombay, 1965, p.255.



Acceptance of the true religion will free the believer from further rebirths and open paradise for him, which is described in Islamic terms, while those failing to recognize the imams must pass through another cycle of rebirths.¹

An interesting account of the practices followed by the Matiyas and Momnas is given by the author of the *Mirat-i-Ahmadi*. The author says, that they had such faith in their religious leaders [referred as Sayed] that they handed over to them a tenth part of their annual income. The devotion of the followers towards their religious head was to such an extent that if a man had ten children he would present one of them to the Sayed as a disciple or pay the latter a money equivalent for the child. The Pirana saints thus, enjoyed large sum of income through their *murids*. The disciples were distributed among the descendants of the saints as part of their inheritance and while marrying their daughters, the sayeds assigned to them a number of their *murids* as part of their dowry.²

It probably due to these practices observed by the Matiyas at Pirana which provoked the wrath of emperor Aurangzeb and led to the revolt of the Matiyas.

The sacred book of the Imam shah is the collection of religious precepts known as *Shiksha Patri* compiled by Imam Shah.

¹ W. Ivanov, 'The sect of Imam Shah in Gujarat,' JBBRAS XXII 1936, p. 206.

² Ali Mohd. Khan Op.cit., p. 320.



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Some of the members of this sect learn the book by heart and are referred to as the *kaka*.

One special family of *kakas* officiates at some of the ceremonies of the *Matiyas*. The *Matiyas* have been divided into three religious divisions - viz, *Panchiyas*, the followers of *Surbhai's* mausoleum at *Pirana*, the *Satiyas*, who follow *Baba Muhammad* and the *Athiyas* who are the followers of *Baqar Ali*. This division is based on the number of devotees who originally managed the shrines of the respective saints. The social and religious custom of the *Matiyas* seems to a great extent the amalgamation of Hindu and Muslim religious practices and customs. They celebrate the festival of *Holi*, the *divaso* and the *Diwali*. Their chief places of pilgrimage to this day are *Pirana*, *Navsari*, *Broach* and *Vemal* (*Bharuch* district).¹

The *Ismalis* produced a number of scholars. *Zakiuddin bin Daud bin Qutub Shah* was one such reputed *Ismaili* scholar of *Gujarat*, who lived during the time of *Aurangzeb*. He is known for his work *Risalat-al-aba-wal-Ummahat*. *Aurangzeb* kept him in high esteem. He called him to *Lahore* and received him with great honour.²

Literary and educational activities in the *Suba Gujarat* also received impetus under the *Mughals*. During the period of

¹ M.S. Copmmassarit, *Studies In The History of Gujarat*, Ahmadabad, 1987, p. 148.

² M. A. Qureshi, *Muslim Education And Learning in Gujarat*, Baroda, 1972, p. 100.

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Aurangzeb *madarasas* and *maktabs* were established in the various cities and towns of Gujarat. Liberal endowments were given to learned men and stipends were fixed for the scholars. The information regarding the facilities provided to the students by the imperial government during Aurangzeb's reign has been furnished by *Mirat-i-Ahmadi*. It is stated that Aurangzeb issued a *farman* to Makarmat Khan, the Diwan of Gujarat directing him that teachers be appointed in all the parts of the Suba and all the students from *Mizan* to *Kashaf*¹ were to be given *wajh-i-maash* from the treasury with the sanction of the provincial Sadr. Accordingly, three teachers were appointed in Ahmadabad, Pattan and Surat and forty five students in Ahmadabad were added to the existing number.²

The traditional education to the Muslims was imparted through *maktabs* and *madrasas*. *Maktabs* or the elementary schools were attached to the mosques where along with the basic principle of religion, recitation of Quran, reading and writing were taught. In *madarasas* instructions in the higher branches of learning was imparted.

A number of *madarasas* existed in Gujarat prior to the coming of the Mughals. Halwi Shirazi who was a poet at the court

¹ *Mizan* and *Kashaf* were specific syllabi of study.

² Ali Mohd Khan op. cit. p. 309.



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of Ahmad Shah I while describing Ahmadabad writes of a number of *madarasas (madaris)* in Ahmadabad alone :

*Madaris daru behado Khanqah
Barai Musafir ke ayad za rah.¹*

One of the most reputed *madarasah* of Gujarat which continued in the 17th century, was that of Shah Wajihuddin Alawi built during the reign of Muzaffar Shah II. Pattan was also famous for its *madarasas* and a number of Arab and Persian scholars studied in the *madarasas* of Pattan.²

During the Subedari of Shujaat Khan (1685 - 1701), Shaikh Mohammad Akram the grandson of Qazi Abdul Wahab built a *madarasah* at Ahmadabad at a cost of Rs. 1,24,000. For the maintenance of this *madarasah* two villages were assigned by Aurangzeb.³ Shujaat Khan himself was the founder of a *madarasah* at Ahmadabad.⁴ In 1678, Aurangzeb sanctioned a large sum of money to repair the *madarasahs* in Gujarat.⁵ Mohammad Akramuddin, the Shaikhul-Islam built a *madarasah* for his teacher Maulana Nuruddin in 1697. He made a request to emperor Aurangzeb for the grant of some land for the *madarasa*. In compliance with his request Aurangzeb granted in perpetuity

¹ Halwi Shirazi quoted in *Mirat-i-Sikandari*, (ed.) S.C. Misra and M.L.Rahman, Baroda, 1961, p.36.

² Abul Fazl's father Shaikh Mubarak Nagori also ran a *madrasa* at Patan.

³ M.A. Qureshi, op.cit., p 71.

⁴ Ibid, p. 71.

⁵ Ali Mohd. Khan, op. cit., p. 58.

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the villages of Lasundra in Savli *paragna*, Metha in *pargana* Kadi and Ranasam in Pattan.¹

There were a number of *madrasas* in Surat which boasted of learned scholars, coming from various parts of India and abroad, as teachers in these institutions.

The major celebrities in the field of mystic literature during this period were Sayed Saadullah Surati and Pir Mohammad Shah. Saadullah Surati was a reputed scholar of his time. He spent almost twelve years in Arabia imparting knowledge and on return to Gujarat, he settled at Surat. Aurangzeb got a *khanqah* built for him and assigned two villages to him in *madad-in-maash*.² He is known for his works *Tuhfat-al-Rasul*, *Kashf-al-Haqq* and *Adab-al-Bahath*.³ He also wrote a commentary on the *masnavi* of Maulana Rum and the *Sharah Hidayat - al - Hikamt*, a commentary on Al-Abhari's treatise on philosophy.⁴

Pir Mohd Shah, another scholar of this period belonged to Ahmadabad. He wrote a number of treatises in Persian which have been collected together under the title of *Nur-al-Shuyukh*. He also had two *diwans* to his credit, one in Persian and the other in Proto-Urdu. This *diwan* mainly comprises of *marsiya*s and *ghazal*s. One of his works which focuses on mysticism which is

¹ M.A.Qureshi, op.cit. p. 169.

² Ibid, p. 90.

³ Ibid, pp. 90-91.

⁴ Ibid, pp. 89-90.



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titled *Ishq - Ullah* is composed in Dakhani. Pir Mohammad Shah died in 1749 and his works are preserved in the library attached to his mausoleum in Ahmadabad.¹

From the 15th century the Vaishnav Bhakti cult had started influencing Gujarat and Rajasthan. It had a very profound effect on the literature produced in this region during the subsequent centuries. The Vaishnav Bhakti tradition can be seen in the writings of two of the eminent poets - Narsinh Mehta and Mira Bai. These saints provided Gujarat and Rajasthan with devotional form of literature. This trend continued in the 17th century also. Besides these two personalities, another exponent of Vaishnava bhakti tradition in Gujarat was Vallabha.

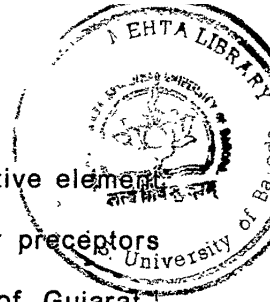
Vallabha, the founder of Pusti sect, of the Vaisnavite school came to Gujarat in the last quarter of the 16th century. Unlike Sankara, Ramanuja, Madhava, Chaitnya and a host of others, he preferred to follow the Upanishadic tradition and like Yajnovalky and others, became a Grahastha Acharya.² This fact explains the ready response given by the majority of converts to this sect from Gujarat, who could get an ideal of a householder devotee - one who could carry on his worldly affairs, and at the same time could remain away from them in their hours of secret communion. There was no need of renouncing the world in order

¹ Ibid, pp. 89-90.

² M.R. Majmundar, Op.cit., pp. 213-214.



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to secure salvation. This comparatively highly attractive element in the doctrines and the model of actual life of their preceptors naturally appealed to the mercantile communities of Gujarat. Many of the rich Bhatia, Luhana, Bania and Marwadi merchants acknowledged Vallabha and his descendants as their religious head.²

It was however, Vitthalesvara, the second son of Vallabhacharya, who made Vaishnavism a living force among the masses of Gujarat. Vallabhacharya and his descendants were also recipients of royal favours. Akbar conferred upon Vallabhacharya a number of favours, one of them being the title of Goswami.³

The doctrine preached by Vallabhacharya gives two alternatives for realizing God : the first alternative of *tyaga* (complete renunciation) which could not be followed by every one. Hence the second alternative of *a-tyaga*, by which every thing was to be utilized for Krisna, was accepted and the ultimate goal was to be achieved gradually.⁴

Vitthalesvara propagated his doctrine mainly in Gujarat and Mharashtra. Since these regions had a commercial ethos, the people could not be drawn into the intricacies of philosophy. For

Ibid, p. 214.

Ibid, p. 214.

Ibid, p. 214.

Ibid, p. 217.

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them Vitthaleshvara organized troupes of amateurs who acted the various episodes from the life of Radha- Krishna in the temples and the country side. ¹ As a result the Krishna bhakti creed spread with great zeal and rapidity in this region.

The bhakti spirit provided Gujarat with the devotional form of literature, a trend which seems to have continued to some extent till the seventeenth century.

It is also significant to note that poetry became the most favoured form of literary expression and all the major works of ~~this~~ period were composed in poetical form. Two of the literary figures who dominated the scene of Gujarati poetry during the seventeenth century, were Akho and Premanand.

Akho (d. 1674) was a Vaishnavite by birth and is considered to be a believer of the *Nirguna Bhakti* tradition. He produced the literature in which *Bhakti* and *Jnan* blended finely. Most of his works are based on Vedantic philosophy, popularly known as *Kevaladaitya*.

Akho's compositions have been found in Gujarati as well as in the Hindi language. Following are some of his well known compositions in the two languages :

¹ Ibid. p .218.



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1) Gujarati Compositions : *Akhe Geeta, Anubhavabindu, Chittavichara. Sanvada, Guru Shishya Samvada, Panchikarana, Awastha Nirupana, Kevalaya Geeta, Kalyan Geeta, Santnalakshana, Saatvar, Barhamasa, Kakka, Padas, Chappa, Vishnupada, Duha, Sortha, Parampadaprapti, Panchdashitatparya, Siddhanta Shiromani, Chatu Shaloki, Bhagvata, Jeevan Muktiullas, Sakhian, Siddhantabindu, Dhuarya, Tithi, Patra and Aarti.*

2) Hindi Compositions : *Santapriya, Brahmala, Kundaliyan, Jhulana, Bhajan, Jakree, Aklaksharamani, Amritkalaramani, Padas, Dhuasan, Sakhian, Karyashodha, Awasthanirupana, Panchdashitatparya.* Except *Chatu shloki* which is written in the prose form, the rest are poetical compositions. The compositions deal with the significance of Brahma and Guru, oneness between the receptor and God, indispensability of the *guru* in the attainment of Brahmagyan, perception of self, rapturous description of God and bliss arising out of attainment of the Reality.

Akho's fame is attributed to his *Chappas*. *Chappas* are written in the *chaupai* metre and are of six line each. Akho has bluntly exposed in his *chappas* the hypocrites posing as Gurus and the shams of his contemporary society. The subject matter of *chappa* and *sakhis* is common as both the compositions emphasize



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upon *guru*, consciousness, illusion, evil souls, devotion, ethics etc.

The language used in the *chappa* is satirical and the poet criticizes intensely the rituals and several practices prevailing in the society of his time. This is interesting to note that his satirical writings have earned the epithet of *chabka* or *karda* in Gujarati.

Criticizing the hypocrisy of the religious leaders of his time

Akho says :

Chappa :

*Vaishnava mekha dhari ne phare,
Prasad tare patrala bhare,
Radhya ghan vakhanta jaye,
Jam Pir se tem jha jha khaye,
Kirtan gaye ne tode tar,
Akho kahe juwani no jor.*

Compactness of Akho's language is more clearly manifested in his *Sakhis*. Emphasizing upon self retrospection he says :

Sakhi : *Nyaya kar jane nar name or raag rang ke jaan,
Atma gyana bina Akha Sab guna kathe Pahada*
[Chetana Angasakhi]

Akho was a Vaishnavite by birth, but later on he developed his own philosophy which was a mix of Vaishnavism and Vedantic monism as propounded by Shankaracharya.

He laid stress on the acquisition of knowledge as a means to the attainment of *mukti*. The cardinal principle of his thought



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included faith in one God, devotional worship which gives one the vision of the Lord, stress on the importance of a guru or the spiritual guide who could help the devotee in the attainment of his objectives. Though considered to be a believer in the *Nirguna Bakti* tradition, Akho advocates like Shankaracharya the *Saguna marga* for the common people. Many of his *padas* deal with the *Saguna-bhakti* of Krishna. On the other hand he seems to be influenced by Kabir and Namdeva and the reflection of their thoughts are visible in his writings. Regarding the form of God he says :

*Mukh bina chakhawun
Netra bina nirkhawun*

Though Akho was not a reformer in a true sense but he attacks the rituals and superstitions associated with religion in a bitter language.

*Tilak karta tirepana bhayo
Japa mala na naka gayo
Tirath fari fari thakya charna
Toeja na pahunchayo Hari na sharana.¹*

Besides *Chappas*, Akho composed number of *padas* in Gujarati as well as in Hindi. There is no marked difference in Hindi and Gujarati *padas* as far as the subject and style is concerned. some of the *padas* have been termed as *Prabhati* as they were sung in the early morning. These are generally knowledge based and depict the childhood acts of Krishna.

¹ Kunwar Chandra Prakash Op. cit, p. 23.



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Some of the other works in which we find devotional exuberance are : *Kundaliyans*, *Jhulana*, and *Jakdi*.

Kundaliyans are written in the form of metre and refer to gyan, bhakti and yoga. In *Kundliyans* Akho's intellectual and philosophical knowledge is truly reflected. In this category of compositions Akho speaks of various ways and means of attaining *gyan* and *bhakti*.

Jhulana composition reflects the influence of *sufism* in Akho's thought. He defines the principle of Advait philosophy in the language of the *sufis*. Profound use of Hindi, Urdu and Punjabi words can be found in these compositions.

'Bin khalaq thaur nahi khali'¹
[*Jhulana*]

The origin of the word *Jakdiya* seems to lie in the Arabic word *Zikr* used by the *sufis*. This was corrupted to *zikari* or *jakdi*. In most of the *jakdis* of Akho we find the pangs of separation of the self with the creator and the yearning for oneness which is the state of bliss or attainment of salvation.

Some other works of Akho deal with Advaita philosophy. Metion may be made of the following :

Akhegita : This work is a combination of 40 *kadva* and 10 *padas*. *Kadva* is a form of *pada*, consisting of three parts,

¹ R.D. Pathak, *Sant kavi Akha Ki Jiwani Aur unki Hindi Kritiyon ka Aqlochnatmak Adhyayan*, Unpublished Thesis (Hindi), MSU, Baroda, 1997, p. 232.



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(introduction), *mukhbandh Valana*, (theme), and *sar* (conclusion) which also contains introduction of the next part. In this work Akho has discussed in a lucid style the true nature of *chittashakti*, *mayashakti* and *prakrti_shakti*, the significance of *gyan bhakti* and *vairagya* and the unity of *jiva* and *Ishwara*.

Panchikaran : This work has been written in conformity with the Vedanta. There are 1022 hymns of four line each and the poet has depicted the four stages of the soul : *Jagrata* (State of consciousness), *Swapna* (State of ignorance), *Sushruti* (State of trans), *Vyapar* (active state). The interpretation of these stages has been done on the basis of Mandakyopanishada which deals with *Brahmagyan*. Through his discussions the poet has tried to prove the existence of Brahma and the futility of the existing world.

Chittavichara Samvad : This composition is written in the couplet form. Akho has expressed in this work his philosophy of *Kevaladaitya* by projecting the relation between mind and matter and the unity between the two. Written in the dialogue form, the matter has been depicted as father and mind as son and it is through this medium that the poet discusses various philosophical issues.



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Kaivalyageeta : This is a short composition in *chaupai* form, which deals with the concept of God and emphasizes *jnan* and *bhakti*.

Brahmalila : This is a discussion of the creation of universe by God and His omnipotence as a proof of His existence.

Akho's works emphasise Vedantic monism where Brahma is absolute truth and the rest is illusion (*Nar Narhari bich nahi Akha ek kagadva ki Oat*)¹ Akho can be regarded as a fearless social critic of his times.

Three of his compositions. *Guru Shishya Samvada*, *Anubhava Bindu* and *Shatapadi* expose the pseudo-learning of the self proclaimed scholars and the hypocrisy of religious leaders of the time. Denouncing the system of social hierarchy he says "to the Narayana none is high and none is low.... This world is made up of five elements but a fool takes pride in his caste. In order to maintain their caste some are called the head, some the waist and some the feet. But really the Brahma, the Kshatriya, the Vaishya and Shudra all are made up of the bodies of Hari, who is then a Sudra?"² In another work *Guru Shishya Samvada* also the poet advises the disciples not to look at the caste of the *guru*. Akho after describing the qualities of a guru advocates that ultimately one should become one's own guru.

¹ R.D. Pathak, Op.cit, p.231.

² *Gujarati And Its Literature*, K.M. Munshi, Calcutta, 1935, p. 182.



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With the spread of Bhakhti philosophy the interest of the masses in religious and mythological stories was aroused and the Puran reciters developed a literary form called *akhyan* or long descriptive poem. Akhyan dealt with themes borrowed from Puranas and other religious texts and were mostly recited by the Brahmins. Man Bhatt popularly known as Gagariya Bhatt, was a Brahmin who developed the practice of *akhyan* recitation which got so closely associated with Brahmins that non-Brahmin *akhyana* poets, such as Nakar, passed on their works to Brahmin *akhyana* reciters.¹

Another significant Gujarati literateur of the period of Aurangzeb was Premanand (d.1636-1724).

He is considered as one of the most popular poets of the medieval Gujarati literature. He had a distinctive style of writing *akhyans* using a flowing language, his unique art of narration and beautiful depiction of the characters, added new dimensions to the art of writing *akhyans*. He has to his credit almost fifty works, but the authorship of some of his works is controversial.²

Some of Premanand's works are : *Okhaharan*, *Abhimanyuakhyan*, *Chandrasahakyan*, *Madalsakhyan*, *Hundi*, *Shraddh*, *Sudamacharitra*, *Mamerun*, *Sudhanvakhyan*, *Rukamaniharan Sholaka*, *Nalakhyan*, *Ranayagya*. *Sawarga ni*

¹ Mansukhlal Jhaveri, *History of Gujarati Literature*, New Delhi, 1978, p. 246.

² Shahin Oza, *Madhayakalin Gujarati Akhyan*, Ahmadabad, 1969, p. 96.



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*Nisarni, Phuvadno Phajeto, Vivekavanjaro, Vishnu Sahasranama,
Nachiketakhyan, Vamankatha, Shamalshanovivah,
Balalila-Brajavela, Dalalila, Bhramargeeta, Nanodashamskhandha,
Pandavoni bhajgada, Mato deshamskandha.*

Premanand was well read in Sanskrit and old Gujarati. He took up numerous episodes from Sanskrit literature and presented them in his *akhyanas* which were extremely popular amongst the masses. Some of his best poems are based on the life of popular *bhakti* poet Narsinh Mehta.

In some of his *akhyans* Premanand has mirrored the society of his times. *Okhaharan, Hundi, Shraddh, Sudama Charitra, and Mamerun*, may be cited as examples..

Okhaharan depicts the authority structure of the family in the times of the author. *Hundi* reflects concept of bank-draft (*hundi*), and the procedures involved in drawing it up. It is stated that a detractor of Narsinh Mehta, in order to embarrass Narsinh directed a pilgrim at Junagadh who was in search of a banker for drawing up a *hundi* worth 700 rupees encashable at Dwarka. Narsinh drew the *hundi* in the name of Lord Krishna in whom he had absolute faith. Krishna in consideration of Narsinh's devotion for him appeared before the devotee in the garb of a Bania for disbursement of the *hundi*. The description and disposition of the Bania is graphic. "The beloved met the pilgrim on the banks of the



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river. He had a fitting appearance. He walked as men do in the market. His turban was of twisted folds. With a pen tucked behind his ear he looked a Vanika. Like a Banja the lord spoke hurriedly and with a lisp. A necklace of gold was round his neck, a broad belt of gold round his waist. His palm had the line of wealth. He had rings on his fingers, a scarf over his shoulders. The lord was of large built."¹

This composition also brings to light the working of an economic institutions such as *hundi*. The poet describes the text of the *hundi* directing the encasher, "Please pay him seven hundred rupees full after ascertaining their exact weight, see that they are not counterfeit, and not yet circulated in currency with their edges intact, pure white just fresh from the mint which have stood the test of the heat and are coined in broad day-light, which are neither of less weight nor of larger (uncommon) size, struck only this year and the latest seal (or stamp)."²

In Shradha details are given of the rituals and practices of this ceremony which is performed on the death of elders. Similarly in *Mamerun*, the poet discusses the ceremony which is performed by the parents of the married daughter in the seventh month of her pregnancy where presents are given to her and her in-laws and certain rituals are performed.

¹ Mahakavi Premanand, *Trishatabadi Smiruti Granth*, (ed.) Manjulal Ranachodalal, Baroda, 1968, p. 156.

² Mahakavi Premanand, *Trishatabadi Smiruti Granth*, Op. cit, p. 158.



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Sudamācharitra *akhyān* is based on one of the chapters of Bhagvadgeetā titled *Dashmamskandha*. Some of the poets who wrote *Sudhama katha* earlier than Premanand have composed it in the form of bhakti, Premanand however, has added in it some of the interesting features so as to attract the audience. Premanand's description of the family of Sudama is very distinct from Bhagvad Geeta's story. Infact the poet has presented in this work the state of a middle class family, where the wife is not being projected as a poor, weak woman but a wise and smart one who not only argues with Sudama to go to Dwarka but pampers him too. Sudama's characterization is not that of a simple meek Brahman of Geeta but of a ordinary human being. Sudama's visit to Dwarka has also been described in a humorous way.

The bhakti literature produced during this period not only emphasized upon love and devotion towards God, but it also condemned the existing order of the society focusing the complexity of the caste system. The picture which literature provide of the Seventeenth century Gujarat is that Brahmins were still held in high esteem by the masses. This is evident from the fact that the mythological stories presented to the people in the form of *akhyana* was mostly recited by the brahmans.¹

Thus, it seems that caste rigidity had not been much affected by the Bhakti movement. A reflection of the society of the 16c. is

¹ M. Jhaveri, Op.cit, p. 246.



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provided to us by vanya Samay who wrote *Vimala Prabandha* (1512). He records the existence of numerous sub castes and informs that every social group which acquired a new local habitation and name by migration remained a self contained unit and exercised religious control over its members. Girls were married at an early age and marriage between members of the different castes were prohibited. Disintegration of the joint family which had commenced prior to the date of the law text Mitakshara (11th C.) was sternly resisted. ¹

The Gujarati literature of the 17th century continued to be steeped in religion and non-religious or secular aspects were by and large not touched in literature. Gujarati literature blended *bhakti* and *jnan* and it can best be seen in Akho. Nevertheless, a beginning also seems to have been made by Premanand of a trend of writing fiction. Though some of his themes were from the epics and he fictionalized them, but he also created his own characters and drew up his own plot. This was the beginning of a new trend towards secular writings that were to follow in the ensuing period.

The Gujarati language that emerges during this period contained a large number of Persian and Arabic words besides words from Sindhi and Punjabi. This was the logical corollary to the socio-cultural processes that the region of Gujarat had been experiencing for the past four centuries.

¹ K.M. Munshi, Op.cit., p. 174.



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It may therefore be safely said that by the 17th century Gujarat was able to create a liberal ethos. This was chiefly as a result of the activities of the *sufi* saints and the Vaishnav *bhakti* exponents. The moral norms of the Gujarati society were firmly laid by the 17th century as a result of these saints and poets and as a consequence of which, it could withstand the puritanical policies of Aurangzeb and the attack of the Marathas with equanimity and poise.



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